



CAREFREE PATH OF DREAMS

BOOK 01

The Plagiarist

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Carefree Path of Dreams

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by

The Plagiarist

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Synopsis

This is the story of a boy who lived a secluded life in the mountains, tending his farm, rearing his fish, and dreaming his dreams. Eh? Did I suddenly conquer all worlds and become the big boss? Or am I still in a dream?

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Chapter 1: Fang Yuan

Clear Spirit Mountain.

These mountains went on for hundreds of kilometers, with its depths unknown, and its lands fertile. They were the lifeline of a mountain people.

At this moment, two figures were walking deeper into the mountains together. Regardless whether it was jagged rocks or thick foliage, they walked on with ease as though they were passing through an empty plain.

Before long, a valley appeared before them. The breath of the earth rose from the ground, mixing with wisps of mist, forming crystal-like dew on the green leaves. As sunlight struck the droplets, the colours of the rainbow shimmered in the air.

"Hmm...the breath of the earth rises, and it looks like springtime is permanent here. This is a decent place. Where is that guy?"

The man with a goatee, fierce eyebrows, and chicken claw-like hands asked.

He was clad in a long green robe, with a piercing look in his eyes and a sort of careless aura about him. The other middle aged minister could only smile while wiping the cold sweat on his face.

"Indeed... There's a separate sanctuary in this valley that was built by a good friend of mine. A virtuous young man lives there."

"You're still calling him virtuous at this point in time?"

The old man with a goatee asked coldly.

"Sigh... His master and I had decades of friendship between us after all. Moreover, I'll owe him one this time... Sigh..."

The minister's brows were furrowed as he gave multiple sighs.

While they spoke, the both of them had already entered the mountain valley.

This valley was not particularly large, but still had a sort of homely feel to it. A river flowed gently through the area, and its surroundings were quiet. In the centre, there was an extremely detailed haven which had tall hedges encircling it. In it grew some Vermillion Jade Rice. Each grain of rice appeared full of vitality and was also easy on the eyes.

"Oh... This courtyard, this land, they're all not bad... That old friend of yours must be quite generous. It's a pity that he's dead..."

The old man with the goatee shook his head.

"Master Wenxin isolated himself from civilisation, and did not bother himself with worldly affairs, but he was extremely well versed in medicine and botany. I only got acquainted with him by chance. That virtuous young man I spoke of was an orphan he adopted..."

The minister explained with a shrug.

Both of them continued ahead, before finally leaping over a hedge and knocking on a door.

Bang bang

The crisp sound echoed throughout the valley but there was no response.

"Hmm? No one is home?"

The minister was surprised and was even more so when the old man with the goatee barged right in.

"Hmph! Playing tricks with us?!"

Within, they found a rustic and simple layout. Other than some daily necessities, there was a small room as well. At the back of the building, there was a small door that led to a large flower garden.

A spring gurgled through the garden. The sound of flowing water merged with the beautiful, colourful flowers surrounding the spring to form a picturesque scene.

From behind a bunch of flowers, a youth stuck his head out.

"So it is Uncle Lin? Please wait for a moment! Let me finish planting this tea flower!"

He looked like he was 17 or 18, with eyes full of energy. His looks were very plain and ordinary, and he wore clothes made of rough cloth. At this moment, his sleeves were rolled up, and the hem of his pants was stained with dirt, just like a professional farmer.

"Oh, Fang Yuan, just tend to your chores first, I'm not in a hurry!"

Perhaps Minister Lin felt a little guilty, which was why he laughed sheepishly while speaking.

Planting tea plants was an art, especially for this tea flower which preferred a cool environment and did not grow well in hot areas. Thus Fang Yuan found a cool corner near the spring, and carefully placing it into the soil.

First, one had to loosen the soil, immediately water it and add fertiliser. Watering had to be done with water from a mountain spring that had been left to sit still for two days. As he executed these steps, Fang Yuan did not move quickly, instead using 100% of his focus, making people feel like they were watching an art performance.

Once everything was completed, Fang Yuan returned to the side of the spring, washing his hands and feet clean of dirt.

The spring water originated from an underwater source, so it was cool but yet not chillingly cold. It was perfect.

After cleaning up, Fang Yuan walked into the house, to face an old man with an unhappy look.

"Uncle Lin, who is this?"

He asked with a puzzled look on his face.

"Ah... Let me introduce you to him!"

Minister Lin broke into a chuckle, "This is Spirit Returning Sect's Outer Sect Deacon, Cold Iron Eagle Yu Qiuleng...Leiyue has just joined this sect..."

"Greetings Mister Yu!"

Fang Yuan broke into a big smile as he greeted his new acquaintance.

"Hmph! You savage mountain men do not know your manners indeed. I've waited for half a day, yet there hasn't been even a cup of tea!"

Yu Qiuleng snorted. If it weren't for Minister Lin holding him back from the side, he really wanted to teach this brat a lesson.

"I'm sorry, my humble abode is rather run down, hence it held me back from serving you on time..."

As for this, Fang Yuan raised his eyebrows and replied casually, before looking towards Minister Lin.

"Uncle Lin, what's the purpose of your visit?"

"Well...this...."

Minister Lin stammered a little, and only a long while later did he speak properly, face as red as a beetroot.

"Lei Yue entered the Spirit Returning Sect, which is one of the top sects within a 100 mile radius, and also has a Wu Zong in it. The sect head tested Leiyue's aptitude and liked what he saw, so he took her in as a direct disciple. Now she will only learn the sect head's martial arts, and must be of pure yin, hence... your marriage with Leiyue..."

"Hmph!"

At this moment, Yu Qiuleng spoke, "Miss Leiyue is a valued disciple of my sect head, with exceptional aptitude. She'll possibly be able to advance to Wu Zong in the future..."

He did not continue speaking, but the idea of [a toad lusting after](#)

[a swan's flesh](#) still seemed to make its way across the room.

"Oh! So that's it!"

Fang Yuan took in a deep breath, and slowly replied, "Both of you, please wait a moment."

He then stood up and walked into the house.

"Hmm?"

This reaction caught Minister Lin completely off guard.

He was sure that if he had met with such an incident when he was younger, he would definitely not have been able to keep his cool.

"Could he be preparing to wage an all-out war on us?"

Minister Lin was a little scared and looked at Yu Qiuleng at his side. Yu Qiuleng shot a glance over, making his intentions clear.

Even if this youth wanted to pull a '[panicking dog jumping over a wall](#)', he wouldn't be a match for this cold-faced iron eagle.

"Uncle Lin!"

The door to the hut burst open, and Fang Yuan walked over, holding a wooden box in his hand.

"This is the marriage certificate for Miss Leiyue and myself. Since we got engaged, I've thought about this a few times, and I realised that I can't compare to Miss Leiyue. Since Uncle Lin could come today, you're actually helping me to resolve an issue that has been on my mind for some time."

"Huh?"

Minister Lin received the box while in shock, and after he opened it he saw the marriage certificate. It was real.

Never did he expect things to go so smoothly, and he froze there for a moment, confused.

However, Yu Qiuleng stood up and walked off with a 'at least you

know your place' look in his eyes.

"Sigh... Fang Yuan, I won't say much about anything else. You and Leiyue really are not fated to be together... This is a small gift, please take it!"

Minister Lin took out a small package while red-faced.

"Since it is a gift from Uncle, then I'll accept it graciously."

Fang Yuan couldn't see what was inside either, and just accepted the gift.

"Good! Good!"

The calmer Fang Yuan was, the more uneasy Minister Lin felt. He pulled Yu Qiuleng away and left swiftly.

...

"Hmm, it's the deed to the land for the entire secluded valley. So Minister Lin could actually pull strings to get this. He's actually quite generous."

After the both of them left, Fang Yuan opened up the package to see a title deed, a few pieces of gold and silver, and a jade bottle.

He naturally knew that this Minister Lin set up the arranged marriage between Leiyue and himself because Master Wenxin had saved Minister Lin's life before.

But now that Fang Yuan's backer had fallen, and the girl had climbed to a much higher position, being able to discuss the marriage annulment amicably instead of falling out was already a blessing.

In reality, he didn't have much of a choice.

That was why he received their compensation gracefully. Otherwise, there would only be hate and anger, which could easily land him in more trouble.

"Instead of agreeing, should I have shouted back and eventually

get eliminated in an attempt to remove any future threats?"

Fang Yuan chuckled as he mumbled to himself.

Thankfully, he was an optimistic person and had only met with Leiyue only a few times, so there wasn't any love between them.

As for humiliation, reputation, etcetera...

For a person that lived isolated in the woods, could those mountain chickens and rabbits laugh at him?

As long as he didn't care about it, his reputation in the outside world was but a strand in the wind. Nothing to worry about.

Since he wasn't afraid of losing face, not taking the compensation from the girl's party would be simply a waste.

"Eh? Vermillion Jade Seeds?"

Upon closer inspection after opening the jade bottle, he exclaimed in surprise.

Inside the jade bottle, there were little grains as shiny as jade, round and full, in a beautiful shade of vermillion. They had a fiery aura about them, potentially making people salivate while gazing upon them.

This was a valuable spiritual plant that Fang Yuan had been searching for since a long time ago. He had requested for it from Minister Lin before, and he had finally gotten it.

"Mhmm, this Vermillion Jade Rice [is of the yang element, but has to be planted during a yin period](#). I'll plant them in that newly cleared patch of land tonight..."

Fang Yuan gazed at the jade bottle one more, with a silly smile on his face.

.....

Outside of the valley.

"Sigh..."

Minister Lin let out a long sigh. Although he had set his mind on this a long time ago, when he saw Fang Yuan's classy and unyielding attitude today, he couldn't help but feel a tinge of regret.

"What is it? Minister Lin is troubled?"

Yu Qiuleng laughed beside him.

"The marriage has been annulled, and he has accepted the compensation. Even if he decides to cause trouble in the future, we will have the moral high ground... Of course, if you're still worried, I can go back and eliminate this problem."

"No No!"

Waving both of his hands, Minister Lin protested, "I just feel that Fang Yuan is really a decent chap, it's a pity that Leiyue..."

"Hmph, if that daughter of yours becomes a Wu Zong in the future, she'll be able to choose any young man she wants, so why should you keep thinking about a mere mountain boy?"

Lei Qiuleng sarcastically remarked.

"Of course, if you still find it a pity, you can get another one of your daughters to marry him! As long as it's not Miss Leiyue, our sect head won't care."

"Sigh..... Since this has already happened, how would I still have the face to bring it up..."

Minister Lin sighed again and picked up his pace.

The two of them walked on further into the distance until they vanished beyond the mountains.

This is a Chinese idiom, which refers to someone very undeserving or under qualified yearning for something that is beyond his reach.

It refers to a cornered person acting out of desperation

Yin and Yang, a Chinese philosophical concept. The yin element is negative/passive/female in nature while the yang element is positive/active/male in nature. Both complement each other in order to become whole.

Chapter 2: Stats

It was midnight and there was a clear moon.

At the back of the valley, there was a hidden pathway. After a short walk through a shrub, the view ahead was a vast grassland with much flora and fauna.

When the sun rose, the view of the valley is clear. This surprised Minister Lin and Yu Qiuleng, but since they had already arrived, why not probe further?

The rice grains here were large as a pearl and shone under the moonlight.

There was also a fertile Jasper fruit tree. The deeper the colour, the stronger the medicinal effects of the Tuber Fleeceflower, and the ones here were purplish-black. There was also the Dragon Fruit Tree, Blue Star Grass, and many other common medicinal plants and food; it was as though the place had undergone a shocking transformation.

Of course, if people found out about this place, they would definitely take advantage of it.

Only in the legends would there be such a miraculous place!

And this type of place belonged to the Spirit Returning Sect.

If Fang Yuan had known about this place, he would scoff because only he knew that although this place was fertile, it was still not comparable to what was described in the legends.

"Master..."

Fang Yuan stood in front of an empty tombstone with sorrow upon him.

He was an orphan and was adopted by Master Wenxin. Master Wenxin was a highly talented and easy-going individual, who was an expert in botany and medicine.

Before his passing, he instructed Fang Yuan to cremate his body, scatter it across mountains, and if Fang Yuan ever wanted to pay his respects, erecting an empty tombstone would suffice.

After instructing Fang Yuan, Master Wenxin closed his eyes for the final time, and Fang Yuan had no choice but to journey alone. He guessed that his Master had too many enemies and was afraid that they would look for him even after his death, which was why he decided to cremate his body and erect the empty tombstone, so there was no way others could track Master Wenxin.

"I planted your favourite tea flowers... and the Nine Purple Grains have started to germinate..."

Fang Yuan continued to mumble to the empty tombstone, "Oh... and Minister Lin came to annul the marriage, but he sent us many gifts, including the Vermillion Jade Rice you mentioned. I shall plant it tonight!"

After his final prayers, Fang Yuan went to a specific empty plot of land.

The moon rose to the top and the moonlight was bright, making it rather visible.

With the aid of the moonlight, Fang Yuan used a hoe and carefully dug a hole and scattered the Vermillion Jade Rice in it.

"This Vermillion Jade Rice needs to be planted at night, the water needs to be directly from the sky, the spring water within the valley can barely be adequate. When first sowed, the soil has to be loosened every six hours, and it must be complemented with Still Fire Liquid..."

Fang Yuan mastered [Botany] under the guidance of Master Wenxin, but lacked hands-on practice.

Though it seemed effortless, his sweat trickled into the soil.

The spiritual plants were far more delicate than other types of plants, and therefore planting them requires more effort.

When Fang Yuan planted the last of them, the sun's brightness had already begun to shine through the horizon.

"Phew... Finally, it's done..."

Fang Yuan wiped his sweat and heaved a long sigh, "Since this is a spiritual plant, it should have advanced my [Botany]?"

Deep down in his heart, there was a secret.

From young, he would often enter a dream. In the dream, it was weird but felt real to the touch. Within the dream, he felt like he was experiencing another life.

Living in the secluded valley and rarely taking a step out, it was surprising that his actions were rather matured for his age, and wiser than normal.

Additionally, there was another bonus, or rather, a gift.

Accompanying Fang Yuan's thoughts, a sight only he can see appeared in front of him,

"Full name: Fang Yuan

Essence: 1

Spirit: 1

Magic: 1

Age: 18

Cultivation: None

Technique: None

Skills: [Medicine (Level 1)], [Botany (Level 2)]"

This dream-like game vision was Fang Yuan's biggest secret.

It also has a special function.

When he looked at 'Skill', more information popped out,

"[Medicine (Level 1)] - Can heal simple wounds, including mild wounds, and with the aid of medicinal plants can achieve even

better results."

"[Botany (Level 2)] - Skilled botanist, can grow any simple plants to its fullest potential!"

So [Botany] was the reason behind the fertile mountains and valleys.

"Essence, Spirit and Magic should be inborn within one, while techniques and cultivation should be one's initiative, and lastly, skill is passive and requires assistance from others..."

After many years of thought, Fang Yuan understood his characteristics even more.

"The present-day me has similar physical qualities as a normal adult, but with skills..."

He already realised that within skills, there should be an attribute like experience which limited growth. Only through intense training and improving one's ability would the skill level be increased.

Take [Medicine] for an example. Even though Master Wenxin had unparalleled Medical skills, and could give focused guidance to Fang Yuan, but unfortunately Fang Yuan had limited subjects to practise his medical skills on, and he couldn't possibly use his Master as a subject. Due to the lack of hands-on practice, from the start till now he was still stuck at Level 1. Even so, he had earned Master Wenxin's praise and thought that he had achieved three-tenth of Master Wenxin's skill.

On the contrary, his [Botany] improved tremendously after Master Wenxin's passing as he had no more considerations. Through his intense training, he managed to attain Level 2 in [Botany], and the results were unparalleled.

Based on Fang Yuan's own guess, even Master Wenxin was not as skilful as himself in terms of botany.

After reaching Level 2, it seemed that his progress in [Botany]

came to a halt, even though he planted numerous plants it was seemingly difficult to level up. After countless of uneventful tries, Fang Yuan decided to try out on spiritual plants and deity plants.

Since these plants were very rare, even Minister Lin himself had to wait for his daughter to be promoted in the Spirit Returning Sect before being able to acquire these plants as a form of a gift.

"Vermillion Jade Rice... even being the lowest grade of spiritual plants, but within the Spirit Returning Sect, I believe only a Wu Zong and his descendants can enjoy it..."

Fang Yuan heaved a sigh.

Minister Lin gave it to him as a present purely to make it up to him and had no thoughts of Fang Yuan having any achievements.

In fact, this was true. Without his [Botany], Fang Yuan wouldn't have wanted the spiritual plants.

However, if Minister Lin could help him attain a Level 2 in [Botany] with the aid of the spiritual plants, that was enough!

Now was the time to see the results!

Fang Yuan stared at the soil covering the Vermillion Jade Rice.

Accompanying the sunrise, a white light only visible to him appeared from the ground and slowly gathered around the 'Skill' segment of his information.

Behind the 'Botany', the 'Level 2' wordings became blurred, jumped and became 'Level 3'!

Level 3 [Botany]!

Fang Yuan rubbed his eyes, made sure that what he saw was true, smiled to himself and exclaimed, "Haha...Haha... I've succeeded!!!"

The reason behind his happiness was because the description for his [Botany] had changed,

"Botany (Level 3) - You are undoubtedly the professional in this

field, harnessing unlimited potential, through your plants. There is a slight chance that they might evolve to have special traits!"

Slight chance or not doesn't matter to Fang Yuan, but this meant that one's own skill and ability could be improved through one's intense training!

Once this thought had been proven, it showed that Fang Yuan could achieve something in this world!

Afterall, it was just a normal [Botany] skill level advancement, but what entailed was unbelievable. Imagine other skills or even martial arts, what are the possibilities?

"Evolving into special traits?"

After calming down, Fang Yuan immediately explored his newfound ability.

"All those normal plants can grow to their fullest potential in my hands, maybe... these normal plants can evolve into spiritual plants?"

He mused for a little, and inside of him was excitement waiting to burst out. If his speculation was correct, then the news of his newfound skill must not go out.

Otherwise, he might be captured by other forces and be forced to undergo experiments like a guinea pig or might be a gardener for life.

"After confirming my new ability, should I be looking for a set of martial arts techniques..."

After calming down, Fang Yuan looked at his breakfast, feeling vexed.

Resources were plentiful within the valley, and the food he prepared for himself was exceptional.

The main course was a freshly caught barbequed fish, smoked till the outside was crispy and the inside tender, with no fishy smell. It

melted in his mouth and the texture was extremely smooth.

His drink was pure mountain spring water, sweet to the taste and refreshing.

Other than that, there were nutritious [Solomon's Seal](#), and a skewer of red berries.

He first dug into a cooked Solomon's Seal, then took a large bite from the barbequed fish, "Mmmm... Delicious! Delicious! I've heard that Spirit Returning Sect is the largest Sect within a 100 miles, I wonder how the atmosphere would be like, or how a Wu Zong would be? Thinking about it, I don't even know how the outside world looks like! What a pity... Master did not leave behind any secret martial arts manual, isn't he a low-profile revered individual? How is it possible that he doesn't have any secret martial arts manual to pass down? This doesn't add up!"

After living in the secluded valley for eighteen years, Fang Yuan grew restless and wanted to see the outside world.

"Now I should unlock my own potential first... the outside world is interesting, but dangerous as well. Considering my small physique, I should quietly train first!"

After eating, he returned to his room feeling satisfied and slept soundly. Not long after, he entered into his dream.

Solomon's Seal is a real plant, try googling it!

Chapter 3: Spiritual Tea

The fire from the burning charcoal was heating the bottom surface of the small red teapot constantly, boiling the tea inside the teapot. Water bubbles started forming, with hot steam rising into the surroundings.

In front of Fang Yuan placed a tea set. He prepared the tea meticulously, firstly by letting the tea to be boiled. The first set of tea was not to be consumed as it was used to clean the tea set. After which, the teapot was sealed immediately with the next set of tea boiling, ready to be poured evenly to the teacups and served. Every motion in this process was so natural that one can even sense the peace and tranquility.

Though Fang Yuan's house was simple, he had tea leaves.

Having that tea leaves was not the only thing that was special in his house as the tea leaves was one of the premium goods cultivated by him personally. Besides, he showed superior standards in the preparation of tea ceremonies, which was well commended by Master Wenxin.

Of course, the previous visitor was wicked and so did not experience such great treatment.

The surrounding of the teacups was filled with the fragrance of the tea. Fang Yuan gently lifted up his teacup in a calm motion and began tasting the tea slowly.

To him, the tea ceremony was not just for self-cultivation, but also to remember Master Wenxin's works.

Although Master Wenxin did not teach Fang Yuan martial arts, he did teach Fang Yuan the techniques of the meditative tea ceremony.

Making tea helped to cleanse the soul, which helped the state of the soul to have a greater sense of well-being.

But why a great sense of well-being?

A grandmaster once said, " Not thinking of one's body, not fiddling one's intelligence, being separated from the body, free from the shackles of wisdom and becoming as one with mother earth. This is the state which has the greatest sense of well-being."

The main idea behind Master Wenxin's tea ceremony was to have a unity of man and nature, so as to achieve the great sense of well-being.

For Fang Yuan, he loved making tea. He even went to look for a tea set that was of high quality just to make tea.

However, things were different now.

From the tea aroma, Fang Yuan only felt warmth to his stomach, and then a thin layer of coldness, thus bringing a cooling effect, making him forget how cold or hot the surroundings had become.

Living in the valley and not disturbed by the chaos from the world elsewhere, Fang Yuan drank and cultivated tea every day with a strong will and determination.

To achieve his goals, he had to be determined and have the will to concentrate.

After tea, it was the best time to reorganise his thoughts as his mind would be clearer.

"Recently, I have gathered all the crops in the valley and re-cultivated with [Botany (Level 3)], and indeed the result is very different. The result shows that I have improved further as compared to his previous best results. The mutation probability is also extremely low since there is not even one case appearing in the whole valley. Of course, it is hard to say for now as the Vermillion Jade Rice is not harvested yet..."

Shaking his head, Fang Yuan got up to get the hoe, bamboo baskets and other equipment before starting on his daily cultivation of crops on the farm.

Watering the crops, adding fertiliser, loosening of soil and then treated in accordance to the needs of the different crops. The whole process was a smooth one.

At high noon, Fang Yuan sat on the rocks and quickly drank a gourd of spring water. Looking at his farm, he felt as though a farmer had just harvested his crops, heart filled with joy.

Fang Yuan then started consuming the rice balls that he had prepared in the morning and a flash appeared in his eyes again;

"Name: Fang Yuan

Essence: 1

Spirit: 1

Magic: 1

Age: 18

Cultivation: None

Techniques: None

Skills: [Medicine (Level 1)], [Botany (level 3)]"

...

"Essence, spirit and magic refer to my physical fitness....."

Thanks to the care by Master Wenxin and his botany skills, Fang Yuan didn't really suffer in his early days. He was well fed and taken care of, allowing his foundations to be strong at the age of 18 and similar when compared to other adults.

"[Botany (Level 3)], with a very low chance of evolving into special traits...."

Fang Yuan sighed and then continued eating his rice balls.

The rice balls were made from the Pearl Jade Crystal Rice cultivated in the farm. Each rice grain was as small as a baby's thumb size. The rice grain was as if an art piece as it was clear and bright. The fragrance of the cooked rice was excellent. One could

feel the crisp of the cooked rice which was incomparable to glutinous rice. The rice even tasted great without any side dishes. The rice was best served with sour beans and sour plums.

Jade Crystal Rice had a very high nutritional value. Jade Crystal Rice soup could be fed to babies in replacement of milk. Fang Yuan only ate one rice ball and he was recharged with energy. He then began to continue his work.

"The Fragrance ball and Rutaceae are ready to be harvested. Old Tian from the Medicine Hall should be here soon to collect them in exchange for salt and oil...."

Sometimes, Fang Yuan went around his farm to pluck a few fruits to eat and to ponder about future plans.

A few moments later, a touch of green met his eyes, making Fang Yuan slow down his footsteps and whispered "Hey".

Here laid a tea forest and the tea trees were specifically chosen to grow tea leaves which were straight flat. The tea leaves also had a fresh orchid fragrance to it, which make the tea leaves Fang Yuan's favourite.

However, at that moment, something was different.

Among all the tea trees, there was one that had a jasper-like tea leaves growing out, giving a crystal colour. The tea leaves from that particular tree were so special that without going through the process of frying of tea leaves, these leaves were able to give out a very strong fragrance on its own. This fragrance helped to keep the mind awake, leaving a strong aftertaste.

"Premium tea leaves! The premium of the premium!"

Fang Yuan gathered near that tea tree. "So this is the mutated result of the level 3 Botany tea leaves? Has this [Houkui](#) become a spiritual plant?"

Unfortunately, he had only seen the grains of the Vermillion Jade Rice, making it impossible for him to compare.

However, such leaves were definitely special!

"It's afternoon, time is just right!"

Seeing this tea tree, Fang Yuan put aside all his worries at that moment and began plucking the special tea leaves to make tea happily.

"No... this is so tempting. I cannot endure anymore!"

After plucking those jasper-like tea leaves, Fang Yuan immediately put a leaf into his mouth.

"Ooohh...."

At the start, there was just bitterness but after which, a very strong taste of orchid came.

His tongue felt bitter with numbness as if it was electrocuted. A clean stream went straight into his mind, making Fang Yuan's eyes glitter, "Spiritual leaf! Definitely a spiritual leaf!"

"There is meaning in the bitterness. The original taste alone has such great flavour, I wonder what happens if such tea leaves are brewed into tea?"

Fang Yuan's eyes shone.

Nighttime.

Fixing, kneading, baking..... Fang Yuan was familiar with the procedures. The effect was still the same even though this time, the tea leaves were different.

Under the fire, he looked at the jasper-like tea leave. His face became sluggish, saying "Beautiful....so beautiful! This newly made spiritual tea is like an art piece!"

Fang Yuan then took out his tea set and went on with the brewing of tea.

At the end, the fragrance of the spiritual tea filled the surroundings, making the place feel as if it was in the Temple of

Heaven.

"I can't forget this excellent fragrance and taste. It is definitely a special tea!"

At that moment, Fang Yuan became calm.

The tea ceremony was a process which included the cleaning of tea leaves. The process also removed one's distractions.

Fang Yuan's eyes glittered. His thoughts had become innocent as if they were like a pure child's.

A tea taster firstly smells the fragrance and then the colour of the tea. Just by the fragrance and the colour of the tea, looking at the cup filled with green clear liquid, Fang Yuan was moved as soon as his lip touched the teacup.

Boom!

It was as if a lightning bolt struck in his head.

As if he became a lone tourist walking among the heavy thorns, his tongue and taste being imprisoned by the bitterness of the tea.

While he was suffering, the thorns disappeared. He began to taste fragrance of the tea, as if the fragrance was like a flash flood, breaking the walls of bitterness, allowing the fragrance to take over the bitterness.

Fang Yuan stared into blank space. His eyes glittered.

Normally, after tasting something good, one will be moved with tears flowing down.

Fang Yuan thought this would only happen in his dreams but did not expect a cup of tea could produce such effect as well.

"Good!"

Finishing a cup, he began making another. The fragrance of the tea gradually faded away, but the taste of the tea became even stronger.

After 4 cups, the taste and the fragrance of the tea still lingered.

"Hooooo....."

After finishing the whole pot of tea, Fang Yuan exhaled with a long breath. The taste of the tea still lingered in his mouth, leaving a lasting aftertaste.

"This tea.... It is definitely special. It seems to be able to question the heart..."

Fang Yuan wiped away his tears, "Just one such product can make me feel as if my soul has been cleansed..... I wonder if this the effect of the spiritual object? Or is it just a fateful coincidence that a miracle happened with the combination of spiritual tea and meditative tea ceremony?"

He began questioning this miracle and subconsciously, he started calling out for his stats before staring into a blank space.

At that moment, his stats changed:

"Name: Fang Yuan

Essence: 1

Spirit: 1

Magic: 1.2

Age: 18

Cultivation: None

Techniques: None

Skills: [Medicine (Level 1)], [Botany (level 3)]"

"Magic increased by 0.2?"

Fang Yuan looked at his stats and mumbled.

These 3 stats: essence, spirit and magic did not have any changes since they rose to a value of 1 after his 18th birthday,

Now, however, his magic stats actually increased by 0.2!

No wonder Fang Yuan suddenly felt full of energy and was quick-witted, as if he became a lot smarter.

"According to theories, essence, spirit and magic are called the 3 treasures, which are the foundation of man"

"And according to my observations and hypotheses, essence refers to the body, the physical strength, the bones and other tangible parts of the body. Spirit refers to the non-tangible part of the body, like the power of the blood. Finally, magic, which refers to the mind, will, perception etc."

"Essence, spirit and magic; these 3 stats complement each other and have their own magical effect!"

Fang Yuan looked at the leftover tea leaves with his eyes glittering. "This tea actually helps to cleanse one's soul and increases the magical effect of it as well. I shall name this tea 'Questioning Heart Tea'."

Houkui is a type of tea leaf

Chapter 4: Questioning the Heart

"This Questioning Heart Tea, when brewed and consumed directly, already work wonders. But when complemented with the Meditative Tea Ceremony, it will boost your magical abilities!"

Fang Yuan sat up straight in front of the table, gazing at the tiny clump of tea leaves on it as he pondered.

After he considered all that he had learnt, he experimented with the tea leaves as per what he did in his dreams.

One ought to know that when brewed directly, without the sincerity and reservedness of the Tea Ceremony, the Questioning Heart Tea retains its taste and will still have a purifying effect on the soul, but its effect on boosting one's magical capabilities is lost.

This revelation further convinced Fang Yuan that Master Wenxin was a miracle worker.

The second point to consider was an even greater source of regret for Fang Yuan.

"This Questioning Heart Tea is most effective when consumed the first time, and its efficacy diminishes beyond that...there should be a limit. Could this be an issue with tolerance?"

Out of habit, Fang Yuan recorded these thoughts on paper.

Experimenting, standardising, recording, will create solid foundations that future experiments can be based on. This too, Fang Yuan learnt from one of the lives he led in his dreams.

Even though he was only 18, he lived a whole life in that dream.

It was a pity that ever since he entered adulthood, the dreams went away.

"Acquiring this extraordinary item was a matter of great luck. I should be happy."

Fang Yuan comforted himself and began his daily work on

patrolling the valley grounds.

"Hm, what should I do with the Questioning Tea Plant? Transplant it?"

As he walked on, creases lined his brows.

Although the botanic garden behind the Spirit Valley was hidden, it was not impregnable. Through his relations with Minister Lin, Fang Yuan obtained the title deed for Spirit Valley and ten miles of the surrounding land. The spiritual plants had their temptations, and Fang Yuan was not about to trust anyone to go near them.

The mutated Questioning Heart tea plant was too conspicuous, and if it were to be discovered, it would be coveted by many. Transplanting it would be for the best.

On the other hand, Fang Yuan had no need to worry about the Vermillion Jade Rice crops, for they were the least spiritual among the plants and had explainable origins.

"I wonder what the spiritual rice tastes like."

Fang Yuan rubbed his chin and felt a rising sense of excitement. He was pleasantly surprised when he arrived at the Vermilion Jade Rice field.

In front of his eyes, fiery red shoots were springing out of the earth, and they reminded him of the lotus plant's sharp corners. This was a place full of life.

"It's really budding?"

Fang Yuan was elated.

After all, Master Wenxin taught him that the spiritual plants relied very much on blessed soil to flourish.

In other places, even the most fertile soil and idyllic landscapes would only support the growth of low-level spiritual crops.

The Spiritual Red Corn crop might be unsightly, but they were spiritual after all!

To think that Fang Yuan himself could grow these crops on normal land. If he could grow the Vermilion Jade Rice crops on more land, not even the Spirit Returning Sect would be as rich as he.

"The Spirit Returning Sect thinks very highly of themselves, but can they eat Spiritual Rice every day? Well, I can!"

Fang Yuan's lips curled up into a slight smile. His eyes gleamed. Suddenly, he let out an exclamation and ran to the edge of the field.

"This..."

What he saw before his eyes made him slack-jawed.

The blue-eyed grass patch on the borderlands of the blooming field was yellowing at the edges. Some of the greenery was clearly withering away. It was as if they had been robbed of their vitality.

And the Yellow Fruit Tree, the Grapefruit Rattan...all the plants that were close to the Vermilion field shared the same fate.

"No way...I grew these low maintenance plants to supplement the Red Corn crops. I thought they'd even make the soil more fertile..."

Fang Yuan took in the sight before him and had a sudden realisation.

"The spiritual plants are so overbearing. They actually sucked the essence out of the neighbouring plants. Well, this was bound to happen anyway. This piece of land is too common to sustain the spiritual crops with its own power."

At this thought, Fang Yuan promptly sped towards the tea garden and carefully examined the immediate surroundings of the Questioning Heart tea plant.

As expected, the Questioning Heart tea plant was blooming fervently, but at the expense of the tea plants around it, which

displayed signs of lifelessness.

"I guess the next time I grow the Spiritual crops, I have to grow them separately. Either that or I've got to make sure that the land is fertile enough to support their growth. Otherwise, they would exert a dire impact on their surroundings."

Fang Yuan bit his lip.

"There must be a way around this. Isn't it just because the land is not high-yielding enough? I could dump more fertile soil on the crops, spray Fire liquid on them thrice a day, add some Fire fertiliser around them...I'm lacking in some of these materials though. Aha! Old Tian is the man to look for!"

Old Tian was an employee of a medical hall in the outside world and was in charge of buying and collecting herbs. Sometimes, he would go to the mountains personally to pick these herbs.

Once, he was bitten by a poisonous snake and was coincidentally rescued by Master Wenxin. Thus, a friendship was formed, and Old Tian regularly brought essential items to the master-disciple duo in exchange for herbs.

According to Master Wenxin, Old Tian gave reasonable prices for his goods and was a down-to-earth fellow. Fang Yuan had listened and therefore kept up a regular correspondence with Old Tian.

In any case, Fang Yuan had supplied premium herbs with very potent medicinal properties to Old Tian in their past few interactions. Old Tian must have made a tidy profit from them.

"Young Master! Young Master!"

Old Tian's voice broke into Fang Yuan's stream of thought.

"Ah, Old Tian, it's you. Come in!"

Fang Yuan greeted Old Tian at the valley entrance with a grin and invited him in.

Old Tian was a funny-looking specimen of a man. He had long

limbs, protruding lips and sunken cheeks. He reminded Fang Yuan very much of a big ape, and he had a sly gaze that was typical of the mountain folk. He was carrying a bamboo basket on his back and placed it down breathlessly. Old Tian rubbed his hands and smiled apologetically.

"Look, Young Master. The items that you asked for the last time, I have them here."

"Well done. It's been hard on you, Old Tian!"

The mountain roads went a long way, and any normal person would have found them difficult to navigate, much less travel on them with such a heavy load.

"The Yellow Fruits have ripened. Wait here. I'll go fetch them."

Fang Yuan beamed.

"Sigh..."

What should have been elation on Old Tian's features was instead a look of hesitation. Old Tian then began grinding his teeth.

"Err...there is something you must know, Young Master. I don't think we can trade anymore."

"Oh?"

Fang Yuan raised his eyebrows slightly.

"But Old Tian, were you not pleased with the herbs you received the last time? Or did you find my prices too extortionate? These matters are all up for discussion."

"No no no! The herbs and spices cultivated by Master Wenxin are undeniably top grade. As for you, Young Master, even the herbs on the highest mountains or in thickest forests cannot compare to the ones you gave me in terms of their richness in quality. It's just that..."

Old Tian flailed his arms.

"In any case, it won't work out anymore!"

"Alright then!"

Having tested Old Tian, Fang Yuan had gained a rough idea of what was going on.

He let out a grin.

"If that's the case, then let us at least clear our inventory this time round. Have a seat Old Tian. It's getting late. Why not stay for a meal and some tea before you leave?"

"A meal?!"

Old Tian gulped. He could almost smell the fragrance of the Crystal Rice he had dug into the last time he visited. The uncertainty he had felt previously was overcome by his inner glutton.

"If Young Master would kindly spare two rice buns, this old man would be ever so grateful..."

Old Tian showed no more signs of leaving. It was as if his legs were rooted into the ground. Fang Yuan suppressed a giggle.

In the world beyond the valley, Crystal Rice was a superior grain that only affluent families could afford. The Crystal Rice crop cultivated by Fang Yuan was even better in quality. Old Tian only had one serving the last time and was already spellbound. He had even requested for some seeds, but it did not take a genius to figure out what happened to his crop.

"You are too courteous, Old Tian. Your visits to the valley are rare occasions, and I like to think that I am a decent host."

Fang Yuan smiled as he entered his hut, and before long, a rich aroma filled the air.

Old Tian craned his neck and sniffed with all his might. His look of intense eagerness made him look even more monkeyish. It was a hilarious sight.

"Do put up with this simple meal!"

Fang Yuan reappeared from the hut with a wooden tray laden with two bowls of Crystal Rice and two more food dishes.

One of the dishes was a freshly picked cucumber, rinsed in spring water and served in slices. They looked like exquisitely carved pieces of jade.

The other dish was pickled beans. The fragrance of the dish wafted into Old Tian's nose and made his stomach grumble in response.

"Excellent! Marvellous!"

Of course, the star of the show was the pearl-like granules of Crystal Rice in the wooden bowls. Their aroma, mixed in with the fragrance of the pickled beans, had Old Tian enthralled.

Old Tian decided to help himself and descended into the rice bowls with relish, letting out grunts of satisfaction at intervals.

Like a raging storm, Old Tian had polished off three large bowls of Crystal Rice and the two dishes. He then seemed to realise that his behaviour was unseemly, and gave a rueful grin.

"Young Master, your culinary skills are legendary. None of the dishes served at the most expensive banquets in the city can compare to the ones you cook!"

"Come come, have some tea!"

Fang Yuan calmly served Old Tian a cup of tea with a look of indifference.

This was a cup of Questioning Heart Tea, but it was not prepared via the Meditative Tea Ceremony. Fang Yuan had long planned to use it on someone so that he could observe its effects for himself. It was just as well that Old Tian had turned up.

"Smells good!"

Although not brewed according to the proper procedures, but the

tea was clear and had a pleasant scent. It was the perfect post-meal beverage. Old Tian's hands were trembling as he fetched the cup over.

"I've never seen a finer breed of tea in my life. Is this a new variety cultivated by Young Master?"

Fang Yuan merely smiled in reply and said nothing. Old Tian dared not ask further and without further ado, emptied the cup in one fell swoop.

Kaboom!

As the tea flowed down his throat, Old Tian felt as though a great waterfall had descended into his body and purified his heart and soul. There was also a rush into his brain that triggered vivid images of his life thus far - his childhood poverty, the struggle of his youth, the hardships of his current days. Old Tian could not help but feel a wave of immense sadness, and tears flowed down his cheeks in steady streams.

Fang Yuan observed the interesting changes of expression taking place on Old Tian's face with glee.

"Young Master, I am guilty!!"

Old Tian suddenly began to bawl unrestrainedly and fell to his knees.

"Master Wenxin saved my life, and yet I let myself be bribed into destroying your source of income. I deserve death!"

"Ahh..."

Fang Yuan was taken aback at the potency of the Questioning Heart Tea.

He peered carefully at Old Tian and shook his head.

"That's right. Without the Meditative Tea Ceremony, the Tea cannot boost one's magical ability...Otherwise, Old Tian would not be in this state!"

Chapter 5: Leaving the Mountain

"Who let you do this?"

Seeing an opportunity while Old Tian was crying, Fang Yuan questioned him.

The Questioning Heart Tea had the ability to cleanse the soul, but could not turn an evil person into a kind one.

Old Tian had a good heart and was able to feel guilty. Therefore, he could come to his senses under the effects of the tea. If he had an evil heart to begin with, he would have simply found that the tea tasted good, and would not have felt any guilt.

"I am not human... boohoo..."

On the floor, Old Tian was crying, "I understand it now, I have lived as a coward my whole life. Now that I have aged, I have acquired some sort of status. But yet I let myself be pressured into hurting my benefactor's disciple. I am not human... I have thought through it. The stupid Spirit Returning Sect, even if I don't do anything, I will not let my benefactor down..."

"Spirit Returning Sect?"

Fang Yuan was shocked.

'Could it be that they are unwilling to let the matter rest? Wait a moment, this is wrong! If they weren't willing to let the matter rest, they would have killed me straight away. Now the situation is neither here nor there, like kids playing a fool...'

At this point, he enquired, "Did the Spirit Returning Sect instigate this? Who threatened you?"

"One more thing. I'm not sure where I'd heard this from, but I do know that I have some relations with your people... Young Master, why don't we leave this place, since the Spirit Returning Sect dominates the surrounding 100 miles of land. Once we are beyond

this 100 miles, we won't have to give a hoot about them! I have some savings with me, as well as some experience in the outside world. The journey should not be a problem..."

Old Tian had found his conscience, and he actively advised Fang Yuan to leave. He began to look for a route.

Fang Yuan looked at Old Tian's shabby appearance and remained speechless, "No rush! No rush! We can wait..."

He then sat down and enjoyed the tea by himself.

"Eh?"

A moment passed, and Old Tian's newfound conscience slowly faded. His sly personality resurfaced. He immediately regretted his words and thought, 'What have I done? Why did I offer to give up my savings to help this Young Master challenge the Spirit Returning Sect?'

To be honest, it was entirely possible for him to warn Fang Yuan and allow him to leave quickly by himself.

But to throw in his life savings and escape together with Fang Yuan? Old Tian scratched his own head and had never felt more foolish.

Fang Yuan stared at him and Old Tian was afraid that he would regain his conscience and run away with Fang Yuan.

Fang Yuan observed that Old Tian looked uneasy and awkward, and he found it amusing.

'Old Tian has a good heart, but he has too many worries in this world, which makes him indecisive...'

Fang Yuan said, "Old Tian, don't you worry. I have no intention to escape, and will not bother you for help!"

"It is of no trouble."

Old Tian responded weakly, but deep down, he heaved a huge sigh of relief.

Old Tian was still baffled at how he had found his conscience today, but since he had already agreed to help, Old Tian reminded Fang Yuan, "Civilians who know what is good for them do not challenge officials. The Spirit Returning Sect might not be made up of officials, but they are in fact more powerful. In what way has Young Master offended them? You should quickly look for someone to help you. If not, then you should hurry and leave!"

"Many thanks to your good intentions, but I will miss this place sorely..."

Fang Yuan spoke the truth.

This was where he had grown up and he had definitely developed feelings for the place, feelings that were hard to replace.

Furthermore, he had the spiritual tea and spiritual rice. It was impossible to transfer these goods to somewhere far in such a short notice.

Additionally, Fang Yuan had faith in his own judgement. Since he had annulled the marriage, and accepted the gifts, there was no reason for the other party to stoop this low and behave ruthlessly.

Perhaps it was one of the lower ranking sect members who initiated this, hoping to curry favour with the upper echelons.

'Could it be Leiyue that caused this?'

Fang Yuan flinched for a moment. In his memory, Leiyue was not that pretty, and the image of her face was blurred.

On the contrary, in his dream world, this was a common plot development in the novels, in which love rivals could suddenly appear out of nowhere and cause trouble.

"Also, an embargo of goods isn't such a big deal!"

He looked at Old Tian and smiled.

"Next time you won't have to suffer that much!"

"Eh?"

Old Tian glanced at Fang Yuan, feeling disturbed.

"I am alone, with no attachments, and have nothing to my name. But you, Old Tian, if you follow their orders, they won't cause trouble for you!"

Fang Yuan calmly analysed it for Old Tian, and took out a platter of herbs, "Here is the medicine, our last deal is done."

"Eh... Young Master, take care!"

Old Tian did not approve of Fang Yuan's decision, but seeing his determination, had no choice but to leave.

...

After sending off Old Tian, Fang Yuan flipped the bamboo basket on the floor.

Old Tian had brought along enough goods this time, and inclusive of his current stash, the amount of stock should be enough to sustain him for the next few months.

"One of the ingredients required to create Still Fire Liquid can only be acquired from the outside world. I had thought initially that I could use Old Tian's assistance... Looking at how things are now I guess I'll have to go personally!"

Fang Yuan sighed, "And as for me being a target of the Spirit Returning Sect, this is a matter to be investigated..."

In truth, since Fang Yuan had always lived within the secluded valley and rarely stepped out, he was actually looking forward to seeing the outside world for himself.

Having decided on leaving the valley, Fang Yuan had to prepare himself.

Firstly, he selected some exquisite and aged herbs to fund his trip expenses and changed into a new set of clothing. The most important thing, of course, was to bring enough food.

The normal rice from the outside world could never compare to

his self-cultivated Pearl Jade Crystal Rice.

Being used to consuming his own produce, food from the outside world might as well be pigs' feed.

After Fang Yuan was done with his preparations, he equipped himself with a machete for self-protection and proceeded with his journey.

...

Clear Spirit Mountain was vast and stretched across several counties.

Qinghe County was the nearest to the secluded valley.

Fang Yuan rarely left the mountains, but he had accompanied Master Wenxin on his trips out a few times before, and therefore knew his way.

There were a few villages along the way and Fang Yuan approached one of them. Fang Yuan was relieved, "If the Spirit Returning Sect really wanted to deal with me, with their vast capabilities, it would be difficult for me to move around... It seems like my guess was correct, was it the initiative of one of the low ranking sect cronies?"

The thought of being seen as a love rival and having to deal with this mystery opponent gave Fang Yuan the shudders.

"This will not do. I should look for Minister Lin and find out if it really is the Spirit Returning Sect making trouble for me. After all, they were the ones who created the problems. I doubt that he'll just stand by and watch the show."

After paying the entrance fee to the town, Fang Yuan walked around aimlessly and did some deep thinking at the same time.

To him, he was willing to forgo his reputation in exchange for less trouble.

But to constantly trouble others was not a long-term solution.

Furthermore, the meeting would definitely be an awkward one. It would be for the best if he could solve the problem by himself.

"Cookies!"

"Cosmetics and accessories!"

"Superior gold jewellery..."

...

Although it was a small town, there were many shops along the streets, and the noise created from all the shouting and bargaining made the town a lively one. It was a sight to behold for Fang Yuan, and there were people who looked at him like he was an alien, but all these did not bother him.

"The creation of the Still Fire Liquid requires some Leaving Fire Wood, water that comes from the sky, and Realgar powder... The first two ingredients can be found in the valley, but the Realgar Powder, I will need to buy it in bulk!"

Fang Yuan considered this for a moment and went into a grocery store.

"What would you like, Sir?"

A middle-aged cashier was at the counter, with a very warm smile.

"I want Realgar Powder of the best quality! By the way... do you accept mountain herbs as payment?"

Minister Lin had given some money to Fang Yuan, but he preferred to use his own medicine, and safekept the money for future use.

After all, if the situation escalated and worsened, and if he needed to run, then bringing money along instead of the miscellaneous stuff would be much more practical.

Fang Yuan was reluctant to leave the valley, but he was also not a fool and knew the obvious choice.

"We do accept medicines!"

The cashier smiled and said, "Whatever mountain herbs you have, bring it to me, young boy!"

"Mmm!"

Fang Yuan knew that even though the cashier seemed friendly, the moment he handed over expensive medicine, the cashier would likely develop an ulterior motive.

Having the appearance of a poor boy, Fang Yuan looked like he did not have any backing.

After much consideration, he took out a cloth bag, which caught the attention of the cashier. Layer by layer he opened it and when the cashier saw that it was just Red Ginseng, disappointment was written all over his face.

"Red Ginseng, 20-year-old, of rather good quality! Let me take a closer look..."

Fang Yuan took out an inexpensive good, but it was still above average. The cashier wanted to look out for flaws in the red ginseng so as to lower its price but to no avail.

This Red Ginseng had no flaws in its appearance, preservation and colour... so the only thing he could say was, "What a pity, its age is too young, I can only give..."

"Wait a moment, I want this!"

The cashier couldn't complete his sentence, and a stretched arm snatched the red ginseng from him, "A pity... it isn't aged enough!"

The voice was like an Oriolus bird, high-pitched and tender. Fang Yuan turned around and saw this young lady dressed in a yellow dress. With unhappiness in his voice, he said, "Lady, this is my Red Ginseng!"

"How much do you want for it?"

The lady was around 17 to 18 years old, around the same age as

Fang Yuan.

"This isn't about money, instead I have been preparing to barter this with the cashier for something else. Your action is like extortion!"

Fang Yuan shook his head, and this angered the young lady, "You!"

"Young man, this sister of mine is worried about her father's condition, which led to her being disrespectful, please do not hold it against her!"

At this moment, behind the young lady appeared an apologetic young gentleman clad in a green gown.

"It's nothing to worry about, your sister's filial piety will definitely touch the gods!"

The young gentleman seemed to be influential, as the cashier rubbed his hands and forced a smile.

Chapter 6: A Trespasser

"Who are they?"

Fang Yuan asked that question while organising the top grade Realgar Powder as he looked at the 2 siblings taking their leave.

"They are from the Zhou family. You are very lucky today to have met the second son of the Zhou family. Imagine if it was the unruly daughter of the Zhou family instead...."

One of the shopkeepers, who seemed to know the Zhou Family, replied and started shaking his head.

"What are you trying to cure with the Red Mountain Ginseng? Is Old Zhou sick?"

"It isn't that simple. The Zhou family is part of the Spirit Returning Sect. Old Zhou, who is a deacon, suffers internal injuries apparently. That is why he needs the medicine now in order to recover. Unfortunately, your Red Mountain Ginseng is not at least 50 years old. Otherwise, there is a chance for you to meet the criteria listed in the announcement!"

"What announcement?"

Fang Yuan showed interest and said to the shopkeeper, "Tell me more about it."

"What announcement? Didn't you see an announcement made by the Zhou family? They are looking for a doctor to cure Old Zhou's illness! The Zhou family promised to give anything that the doctor wants if the doctor is able to cure Old Zhou's illness...."

The shopkeeper sighed, making it seemed like Old Zhou is unlikely to recover.

Fang Yuan listened before viewing his stats subconsciously. His medicine level was recorded in his stats window.

Being recognised by his stats system meant that his ability had

attained a certain standard.

Even though Fang Yuan had learnt a few techniques, only those techniques related to medicine and botany, which had been vetted by Master Wenxin were recognised.

Hence, Fang Yuan considered himself as a much skilful doctor as compared to other normal doctors.

The only thing was that Fang Yuan was lazy in nature and he was also not very fond of Miss Zhou's temperament. Therefore, he wouldn't volunteer himself to help her.

'Since the Zhou family is part of the Spirit Returning Sect, perhaps I can pick up martial arts from them....However, this seems dangerous, maybe I should just forget about it....'

Even though the Zhou siblings were rude, they were very generous with the rewards in terms of money. The reward would definitely allow Fang Yuan to purchase the Realgar Powder in bulk with spare change left.

After exiting the shop, Fang Yuan continued shopping happily.

'Thinking about it, someone from the Spirit Returning Sect must have made this decision without consulting anyone. This makes the announcement less reliable.'

At noon, Fang Yuan squatted at a corner and kept thinking about the announcement while consuming the rice balls he brought.

This was good news as it meant that he was not forced to leave his hometown.

When the Zhou Family attempted to cut his supply through Old Tian, they didn't force himself to leave, but it was hard to say what would happen next.

'Maybe....Should I go and pick up martial arts from the Spirit Returning Sect and practice? Legend has it that the Spirit Returning Sect is led by a Wu Zong. What is a Wu Zong? Is it very

powerful? But I'm not really sure if the system would recognise martial arts...."

The rice balls were made from Pearl Jade Crystal Rice and sour plums were wrapped inside them which produced a great aroma.

A few beggars gathered around Fang Yuan. Their eyes glittered and they were drooling, obviously attracted by the aroma of the rice balls.

Luckily there were many people along the street. If not, the beggars that gathered would have started snatching the rice balls.

"Haha....so you are here, little beggar?"

At that point when Fang Yuan was surrounded by those pitiful stares and wanted to give up some of his rice balls, a familiar voice was heard.

He lifted up his head and saw Miss Zhou giving him a cocky look.

"Me? I'm a beggar?"

Fang Yuan was stunned as he pointed to himself.

"You are gathering with the other beggars. If you are not a beggar then what are you?"

Miss Zhou grinned and brought out a purse with gold and silver linings. "How about I give you beggars a few coins to go into a restaurant to have a good meal?"

Fang Yuan looked at himself and turned speechless.

Usually, villagers who entered a city were dressed in this manner, which left Fang Yuan no choice but to accept it.

He rolled his eyes and ignored Miss Zhou. He then continued eating his rice balls.

"Haha.....you villagers treat rice balls as if they are treasures. I just came from a restaurant....what is that smell?"

Miss Zhou smelled and found out the aroma was coming from

Fang Yuan's rice balls.

Each grain of the Pearl Jade Crystal Rice grains are clear as crystal and they complement well with the sour plums. These rice balls did not seem like what villagers usually eat.

Of course, the main attraction was the fragrance of the rice balls.

She just had the same type of rice from a restaurant, but the aroma of the rice balls is just....too tempting already....

Resentful, Miss Zhou started to realise that her stomach started growling even though she had just finished a meal.

This was not because of her hungriness, but the fact that the delicious rice balls were tempting her!

She started to feel as if the rice balls Fang Yuan were eating were like a black hole, constantly attracting her attention.

If she continued staring, she would drool!

Miss Zhou wisely decided to turn back and walked off.

"Do you....want that?"

Fang Yuan met Miss Zhou's eyes and felt that she was pitiful. Hence, he gave out the last rice ball, "I'm giving you the last one!"

Miss Zhou swallowed and started blushing. Her fingers shook a little, which seemed to be reaching for the rice balls. At last, she blurted, "What a joke....I'm Zhou Wenxin from the well known Zhou family. How could this be happening...."

Her footsteps brought her closer to the rice balls as she blurted.

"Oh, you don't want the rice balls I see!"

Fang Yuan understood her and gave the last rice ball to one of the beggars instead, "Take it!"

"Thank you, sir! Thank you, sir!"

That beggar was drooling right in front of Fang Yuan before. He became so grateful that he kept thanking while eating the rice ball.

That beggar grabbed the rice ball with a good amount of force. Meanwhile, it seemed that Zhou Wenxin was about to explode anytime.

"Ooohh....this is delicious!"

That beggar wolfed down the rice ball within seconds and started licking his fingers after finishing it.

"You...."

Zhou Wenxin's face became sluggish and blushed. Suddenly, she started crying out loud, "You bullied me!"

Not really sure why she felt that way, she turned and ran away.

The people who knew Zhou Wenxin gathered around Fang Yuan and admired him for what he did.

This guy was able to deal with the rude Miss Zhou by leaving her crying. This guy is capable of accomplishing anything in the future!

"This...."

Fang Yuan scratched his head and thought that he was innocent. It wasn't his fault that Miss Zhou cried. Sometimes, it was better to clear any misunderstandings that were made by others as IQ may not be equal to EQ.

However, he knew his EQ was low and he knew that if he didn't start running, he would be in big trouble when Miss Zhou's bodyguards came for him.

He started fleeing to a corner of another street.

....

Fang Yuan's prediction was correct.

Miss Zhou's bodyguards, looking angry, came running here not long after. Luckily they hadn't started locking down the whole city.

Fortunately, Fang Yuan was already outside the city, on his way back to the valley.

There were a few in the city who recognised Fang Yuan's looks, but no one knew where he lived.

Zhou Wenxin was furious for not learning Fang Yuan's name and could only give up on this matter. The news of Fang Yuan making Zhou Wenxin cry had spread everywhere in the city, causing Miss Zhou to be very embarrassed about the incident. Many had witnessed the incident happening, which made Zhou Wenxin even more furious. Unfortunately, she had nowhere to vent her anger.

"Hmm....So Wu Zong is a cultivation stage a martial artist can attain. A Wu Zong would be powerful to the extent that he would be able to defeat many. In the entire Spirit Returning Sect, there is only one such martial artist...."

Fang Yuan bought a book from a stall nearby using a few copper coins and was enjoying the contents.

This book appeared to be written by a scholar. The contents were based on a personal account and it seemed that the writer loved to travel. The content even mentioned something about Wu Zong, which attracted Fang Yuan.

"And here lies the Clear Spirit Mountain. Here is the Qinghe County and that city just now was Qingye City...."

What made Fang Yuan so interested in the book was that he was able to know where he was and the surrounding places from the book itself.

"The mainland is so big. The county where I am right now is so small when compared to the mainland. However, some may think that this county is quite big already....."

From the book, Fang Yuan knew how big the world is, which made him excited.

"Wu Zong is only well known in this area. There should be other

structures other than martial arts...."

Fang Yuan put the book back into his bamboo basket and began trekking.

"Unfortunately, I was unable to get any martial arts manual. I should not think about other types of manuals then...."

Once back into the secluded valley, Fang Yuan felt at ease.

"It is still more comfortable back at home...."

Although he was not away from home for long, Fang Yuan was homesick.

He immediately went to the farm after putting his belongings down.

"Eh?"

Upon reaching the entrance, he was shocked by the presence of an animal's footprint, "A pest?"

Having a farm in the mountains would definitely attract all kinds of birds and animals. Luckily, Master Wenxin had a way to prevent any pest from entering the farm.

Tigers, wolves and other mammals would use their pee to mark out their territories. Other animals would not dare to enter these territories upon smelling the pee. In actual fact, some kind of herb was made into liquid form and would be poured around the whole perimeter of an area, tricking the other animals into think that that area is someone's territory and hence no one would enter.

Even if this method is a failure, the traps would have solved the problem of any trespassing.

However, the traps in the farm were damaged and the baits were missing as if the trespasser was laughing quietly at the back.

Chapter 7: Spiritual Beast

"Hmmm... from the footsteps this is an animal that is not too big not too small just like the size of a hunting dog..."

Fang Yuan kneeled down and observed the distinct footprint, "It is not too deep into the ground so it shouldn't be too big in size. A wild wolf? Fox? Or a weasel or a badger?"

"What a clever animal it managed to destroy our trap..."

Since growing up from the mountains Fang Yuan was skillful in catching wild animals because he often had to catch wild chickens and rabbits for food.

And for a trap this meticulously set up even a wild wolf or boar should not have been able to escape.

But right now the trap was completely destroyed as though the animal had thoughts of provoking the one who set up the trap.

"Master once said in the deep mountains there might be unusual beasts. Even if they started out as normal animals given the right circumstances and conditions they will evolve and become smarter could it be one of those smart animal's doing here?"

By setting up the trap and attempting to 'steal' the animal Fang Yuan felt wiser as though he was not facing a normal animal but a human. This led him to have a heavy heart.

"Hmmm... our losses are not much..."

He scanned around the surroundings and suddenly jumped up. He urgently made his way back to the tea garden, "This isn't good... My spiritual plants!!!"

Since the thief was not a normal animal normal crops would not be able to attract them therefore the only possibility was the Questioning Heart Tea Tree and Vermillion Jade Rice that attracted it!

After sorting out his thoughts Fang Yuan felt very uneasy and could not calm himself down.

A moment had passed and Fang Yuan felt very angry. He shouted within the secluded valley, "Go and die... Don't let me catch you..."

Fang Yuan stood in front of the Questioning Heart Tea Tree with sorrow on his face.

What used to be emerald-green tea leaves was now empty branches with bite marks on where the branches were broken.

The entire tree looked worn-out. Fortunately, its roots remained undamaged otherwise Fang Yuan would have lost it forever.

"What is this?"

After a close inspection, Fang Yuan discovered more clues around the Questioning Heart Tea Tree.

He rubbed his right hand against the broken branches of the tree. A layer of fine crystal droplets covered his fingertips. He realized the fine crystal droplets were all over the tree not only at the surroundings of the broken branches but near the roots of the tree as well.

"I did not put this here could it be the thief that brought it here?"

Fang Yuan placed these droplets near his nose and immediately smelt a fragrance followed by a putrid smell.

"Fertilizer?"

He looked at the worn-out Questioning Heart Tea Tree made a conjecture and had mixed feelings about it.

This spiritual plant thief dared to treat the Questioning Heart Tea Tree as its own and even defecated on it to make sure it would grow again so it could have another meal.

"It surely must have left the place because if it saw me it would have approached me..."

Fang Yuan shook his head and rushed to where the Vermillion Jade Rice was planted at.

On the contrary, the Spirited Red Corn was left untouched and even grew a little taller than it was before. The surrounding plants around the Spirited Red Corn seemed like they had dried up.

"The Spirited Red Corn couldn't even attract its attention the thief must have quite high standards..."

Seeing that the entire garden was left untouched and that the thief only had the intention to damage the Questioning Heart Tea Tree Fang Yuan was left speechless, "I will immediately set up another trap and wait here day and night just to see who is the thief!"

When his anger had subsided Fang Yuan thought that the whole incident was quite interesting as he could not wait to see who was the one who stole his tea leaves.

...

After calculating all his losses he had to carry on with his normal life.

Fang Yuan processed the Realgar Powder mixed it with the rest of the ingredients according to the correct ratio and placed it in the cellar for three days. He managed to produce a large amount of Still Fire Liquid.

This recipe was passed down from Master Wenxin and was a great fertilizer for many fire-type plants.

Since the Vermillion Jade Rice was a spiritual plant Fang Yuan had to water it thrice a day for it to grow and develop. It no longer had to compete and take the nutrients from surrounding plants to survive anymore and Fang Yuan felt relieved.

Days passed but the mysterious thief had not appeared. On the other hand, the constant lookout day and night took a toll on Fang Yuan.

Midnight with a clear moon.

Fang Yuan placed his trap and observed silently at a hidden spot.

Within the Tea Forest was silence and only occasional crickets which echoed within the secluded valley.

"Could it be that the thief saw me and is unwilling to approach?"

After keeping watch for a few hours Fang Yuan felt sleepy and a little disappointed, "I shall keep watch for another night and if the thief doesn't appear I will graft the Questioning Heart Tea Tree to somewhere safe... as for the crystal droplets it's a pity..."

Through the past few days of observation Fang Yuan became sure of his conjecture and true enough the crystal droplets was a fertilizer to spiritual plants.

Not only did the condition of the Questioning Heart Tea Tree improved its branches had healed and on the Spirited Red Corn which he scattered some of the crystal droplets they too began to grow larger than usual.

This unique fertilizer for the spiritual plants immediately aroused Fang Yuan's interest. He even considered letting the thief go if the thief was willing to share where it obtained the fertilizer from.

"Ahhhchooo..."

The next midnight had arrived and Fang Yuan's eyelids were heavier than before; he was ready to sleep anytime.

"It seems that it will not come tonight and since I have to wake up tomorrow morning to loosen the soil for the Spirited Red Corn I shall go... eh?"

At the moment when Fang Yuan stood up, a white flash caught his eye.

"It's coming!"

Fang Yuan became more energetic and in a moment did not feel

sleepy anymore.

The white flash rushed towards the garden and saw the trap left by Fang Yuan. It appeared undisturbed as it gingerly made its way around the trap used its paws to grab the tree branch and pulled it out. This action triggered the trap but it couldn't catch anything as the beast was already out of its way.

"Wow! What a big and clever White Ferret!"

Fang Yuan heaved a huge sigh.

There was no mistake that right in front of him was a large White Ferret. It had large eyes long fur and a pair of extremely agile paws. Its ears would twitch from time to time as though it was listening to the surroundings and its white fur was extremely reflective under the moonlight.

A normal ferret would be about the size of a cat but this one grew a metre long like a small leopard.

"Oh boy! What a large White Ferret..."

Seeing how the ferret moved about freely within the tea garden Fang Yuan took another look at his inadequate equipment and thought, "Why not... I let it do whatever it wants today and the next time it comes I shall get more backup!"

He was not a professional hunter to begin with and even though he prepared a comprehensive list of equipment to catch it but looking at the 'demonic' White Ferret he did not dare to catch it.

"Keke!"

The moment the White Ferret entered the Tea Forest his jet-black eyes focused at Fang Yuan's hiding spot as though it had noticed him!

"How dare you! You beast!"

Fang Yuan had no choice but to reveal himself, "You destroyed my tea tree for the first time and now you're back for the second

time do you really treat me as non-existent?

Simultaneously while jumping out Fang Yuan lit a fire torch.

Under the illumination of the torch, Fang Yuan could see the expression of the White Ferret as though Fang Yuan was a joke. It did not run but instead made eye contact with Fang Yuan.

‘Oh no, shouldn’t these wild animals be afraid of fire and humans? Why doesn’t it seem so now?’

Deep down Fang Yuan was regretting his actions.

Seeing that the White Ferret did not treat him seriously and continued to munch on the branches of the Questioning Heart Tea Tree. Fang Yuan flared up, "How dare you!"

He grabbed his fire torch in one hand and his machete in another rushing towards the White Ferret, "Don’t touch what is mine!"

"Sssss!"

In the next moment, he saw the White Ferret turned around its fur standing and it was making a hissing noise. Fang Yuan knew that this was bad but proceeded to lunge forward with his machete.

‘Sou!’

The white shadow flashed by as Fang Yuan felt a strong force on his wrists forcing him to take a few steps back. His wrists weakened and he dropped both the machete and the fire torch, "This beast is too quick too strong!"

"Keke!"

Seeing how Fang Yuan was unable to withstand his first attack the White Ferret looked away and stroked his tummy as though he was mimicking a human laughing.

He was a spiritual being. He waved his little paws at Fang Yuan and pointed to the Questioning Heart Tree as though he was saying, ‘This spiritual plant from today onwards will be mine!’

"No.....I cannot take this!"

Being mocked at by the beast Fang Yuan felt unjust. He did a flip from the ground and exclaimed, "Look out for my hidden weapon!"

With a flick of his wrist, a few small paper packets flew out from his hand.

‘Peng peng!’

Smoke and fog exploded in mid-air bringing with it a pungent smell.

Fang Yuan appeared calm but without thought turned around and ran!

Even though a fight might be lost one should naturally look for a way to escape and in the future come back to deal with the white ferret. There was no rush for a gentleman to take his revenge.

"Sssss..."

Within the smoke came a shrill from the white ferret. Fang Yuan stopped in his footsteps.

He turned around and saw the white ferret pacing around the white smoke as though it was very afraid of it.

"Eh?"

Fang Yuan felt relieved.

He only meant for the smoke to help him escape because within the paper packets were normal non-spiritual items.

"I placed plenty of beast-repelling powder and if it is of use how can the beast enter? It seems like it also isn't about the pepper... It must be... the Realgar Powder! Haha... Just wait and see!"

Fang Yuan ran back to the valley and in no time brought along many bags of powder, "So you're scared of Realgar? Hahahaha... let's see!"

‘Peng peng!’

With the flick of his right wrist, large amounts of Realgar Powder scattered into smoke covering the entire place.

Although the white ferret seemed determined it appeared that he was really afraid of Realgar and did not dare to move.

When the Realgar smoke settled it was gone.

Chapter 8: The Exchange

It was a quiet morning.

A thick fog gathered around the emerald-green leaves, condensing into water droplets as large as a pearl.

Fang Yuan paced around the garden, and carefully scattered the Realgar Powder on the soil, especially around the Questioning Heart Tea Tree and Vermillion Jade Rice plants, as these were the spiritual plants he wanted to protect.

"I can't imagine, such an agile and strong beast would have so much fear for a normal Realgar? Could it be true that one item would be the perfect counter to another?"

After finishing up, he wiped his sweat, sat on a large rock and started to ponder.

"Ferrets are afraid of Realgar? Wait a minute, this ferret is no ordinary ferret, it's possible that its fears are different from the usual ferret. Ferrets like to eat snakes, could it be that it ate too many snakes and evolved certain special traits?... Luckily I still have quite a lot of Realgar Powder left over!"

In order to make enough Still Fire Liquid, Fang Yuan bought not only the highest quality Realgar Powder, but also got a large quantity of it, and so did not need to worry about not having enough of it for the time being.

"But I'll still have to be careful, as the White Ferret may react differently once it becomes desperate."

Fang Yuan plucked a few fresh fruits for breakfast, went to the river and collected some pure spring water. He then took out his tea set and some Questioning Heart Tea leaves.

These leaves were roasted before they were sealed, which kept the essence of the Questioning Heart Tea leaves, and since they were stored away and well hidden, the White Ferret did not

manage to get its paws on it.

If the White Ferret took these last leaves, Fang Yuan would definitely be speechless and depressed.

Boiling water, washing the pot, setting the tea leaves...

Within the peace, every single movement seemed effortless and tranquil.

Not long, the fragrance of the tea leaves rose.

"Good!"

Even though he had drank this tea countless times, the comfort this tea brought to Fang Yuan was still able to earn his praise.

He noticed his qualities and saw a change at the top,

"Name: Fang Yuan

Essence: 1

Spirit: 1

Magic: 1.4

Age: 18

Cultivation: None

Techniques: None

Skills: [Medicine (Level 1)], [Botany (level 3)]"

"A normal person should have an average magic value of 1, but I have already exceeded that by about half... Although the effects of Questioning Heart Tea has decreased, before it loses all its effectiveness, maybe it can increase my magic level by more than twice of the average?"

More than twice of the average human, how would that feel like?

What Fang Yuan didn't know was that although he had only increased by 0.4 in magic, he would feel much wiser, and memorising books would take a much shorter time than usual, as

though the gods were helping him.

Take now for an example, At the corner of his eye, he quickly spotted a white flash.

"Keke... Have you not given up? Come out!"

With the Realgar Powder in one hand, Fang Yuan waited patiently without fear and exclaimed loudly.

From the previous encounter, he knew that the White Ferret was a spiritual being, and could not be dealt with using normal ways, and it seems that it could understand what Fang Yuan was saying.

"Come out!"

"Come!"

"... .."

His voice echoed throughout the valley, but the white shadow was nowhere to be seen.

"That's true, it's daytime now..."

Fang Yuan looked at the sunrise, "Wasn't it night time? Eh... This fellow only appreciates spiritual plants, and the only thing more superior than the Questioning Heart Tea here is the..."

He smiled to himself and brewed another pot of Questioning Heart Tea, the fragrance of the tea spreading far.

"Keke!"

As expected, a loud hissing followed by a white flash appeared. It circled the Realgar Powder but did not dare to approach it.

"Seeing how the Questioning Heart Tea Tree was damaged, the essence of the brewed tea leaves would attract it even more right?"

Fang Yuan took a teacup, walked a few steps forward and stopped one and a half metres from the White Ferret.

"Hisss!"

Behind the line marked out by the Realgar Powder, as White Ferret tried to approach, its fur stood and he made a sound of fear but dared not to approach.

The fragrance of the tea made the White Ferret even more desperate as it scratched its head like a monkey.

"Haha... you are a ferret, not a monkey!"

Fang Yuan became intrigued and the kid in him took over. After a round of fooling with the White Ferret, he exclaimed, "If you don't ask and take, that makes you a thief! This tea tree and tea leaves have an owner, and only if I am willing to give it to you, then will it be yours. Understood?"

Within the secluded valley, he was always living alone and had already been used to himself mumbling to himself. He laughed at himself, "How would I expect for you to understand such complicated teachings..."

At this moment, Fang Yuan's eyes grew wide.

The White Ferret clasped its paws together as though a human apologising, its jet-black eyes staring at the cup of tea, as though it was begging for the tea.

"This White Ferret is magical!"

Fang Yuan mumbled to himself, looked at the cup of tea in his hands, and suddenly he realised, "Yes... this Questioning Heart Tea has magical properties and would be even more valuable to the wild animal. Could it be that the tea leaves made it smarter?"

Fang Yuan told the White Ferret, "If you want to drink this cup of tea, you will have to understand... It is hard to obtain this tea, and I do not have much of it left. If you really want this tea, you will have to exchange it with the fertilizer that you brought the other time!"

Fang Yuan was still thinking about getting his hands on the crystal droplets, as they were spiritual fertilizer.

This was because he noticed that by using the crystal droplets as fertilizer, the Vermillion Jade Rice grew very well, and even the broken branches of the Questioning Heart Tea Tree began to heal and shoots began sprouting.

This led Fang Yuan to realise that the translucent crystal droplets that the White Ferret brought were a superior spiritual fertilizer, and it enhances the growth of all spiritual plants in ways no one could imagine.

Because of his limited experience, Fang Yuan could not tell what were the crystal droplets.

About 100 miles from Clear Spirit Mountain, much of it remained unexplored and only a spiritual beast like this White Ferret could have explored the uncharted territories and knew where to look for such a precious item.

"Do you understand?"

Fang Yuan noticed that the White Ferret was a little confused, so instead, he took out some of the spiritual fertilizer, "This is the one I'm looking for! I shall treat you to this cup of tea first, treating you as a guest. Next time if you want another cup of tea, bring me this spiritual fertilizer!"

The White Ferret looked at the spiritual fertilizer in his hands and appeared to understand a little of what Fang Yuan said.

"Alright, now take a step back, otherwise if I topple this cup of tea, don't blame me!"

Fang Yuan took two steps forward.

The White Ferret could understand and immediately backed away.

Fang Yuan approached the line made by the Realgar Powder, and placed the cup of tea beyond the line, "Enjoy!"

"Keke!"

The white flash appeared like lightning.

As the White Ferret approached the boundary of Realgar Powder, it slowed down and circled the cup of tea, and sounded delighted.

"Mmm, it seems that it is enjoying the cup of Questioning Heart Tea! After all, I used the Meditative Tea Ceremony to brew this cup of tea..."

Fang Yuan observed it, nodded his head and opened his eyes wide.

He thought that the White Ferret would lick the cup of tea. However, he never expected that it would stand up, sit down like a human, then used two paws to lift the cup up and took a sip.

"Phew... Keke..."

After taking a small sip, the White Ferret smiled, took another sip as though it appreciated the cup of tea.

"What the! I must be seeing things! This isn't a ferret..."

The appearance of the White Ferret led Fang Yuan to think about Master Wenxin. Master Wenxin also had the same expression when drinking the tea Fang Yuan brewed.

"Did the White Ferret learn these actions from a human?"

Although he took small sips, a cup of tea was still a small amount of tea.

After drinking, the White Ferret stared at Fang Yuan, as though he was an abandoned dog, and it appeared as if he wanted another cup of tea.

"You are quite clever..."

Fang Yuan scoffed, "Now you know how hard it is to obtain and brew these tea leaves?"

Questioning Heart Tea had always been a spiritual object, and combined with the Meditative Tea Ceremony, the effects were

remarkable. Other than Fang Yuan himself, even Old Tian could never have enjoyed such a tea previously.

"If I gave him enough tea to drink, would it be possible for this White Ferret to become as smart as a human, and enable him to talk?"

Fang Yuan looked at the seemingly smarter White Ferret, with an idea evolving in his head.

"Alright, alright, looking at you, such a poor thing, how about another cup!"

"Ah? Do you want more?"

"No... I can't give you more, that's all the tea leaves I have for today!"

Within the secluded valley, divided by a line of Realgar Powder, sat a human and a ferret enjoying tea. It was an interesting sight to behold.

At the end, the White Ferret sniffed the spiritual fertilizer that Fang Yuan threw, confirmed that the teapot had no more tea, before leaving in a white flash.

"One should always hold his guard against other people... animals!"

Fang Yuan looked at the shadow of the White Ferret, and mumbled to himself, "Although wild animals have a purer mind than humans, I still have to guard against it, and only when it brings me the spiritual fertilizer, will I give him a few raw tea leaves, so that it knows that if it wants the real Questioning Heart Tea, he will have to obey me, then I can feel slightly relieved."

Since the tea was finished, he stood up, satisfied, stretched a little and began the day's work.

"Spiritual fertilizer, oh spiritual fertilizer!"

Within the Vermillion Jade Rice farm, Fang Yuan poured the last

of Still Fire Liquid. From the corner of his eye, he noticed one of it growing exceptionally large and therefore felt resentment.

Because based on his calculations, even if the Vermilion Jade Rice was able to grow smoothly, it would still take a few months before the first harvest.

But if he was able to supply the spiritual fertilizer every day, then he probably would be able to taste the Spirited Red Corn in the following month.

"Originally, the spiritual tea will only grow new tea leaves in the next season, but today new shoots are sprouting... This spiritual fertilizer is amazing!"

Fang Yuan thought of following the White Ferret, but the only problem was that it ran as quick as lightning, and so he gave up on that thought.

Anyway, he just needed to have faith in his own Questioning Heart Tea.

As long as the White Ferret want the Questioning Heart Tea, It would have to obediently bring the spiritual fertilizer.

That night, Fang Yuan dreamt of something.

In the dream, he took out large quantities of the spiritual fertilizer, and covered the Questioning Heart Tea Tree and Spirited Red Corns with it. The harvest he managed to get was so plentiful he was not able to store it in the storage, and even though it was in his dream, he smiled to himself.

...

"Keke!"

"Keke!"

The next morning, Fang Yuan was woken up abruptly.

"Ferret Brother! The sun has not risen yet!"

Hearing this sound, Fang Yuan knew who had arrived. He sneezed, went to the garden and saw the White Ferret.

The moon had set and the stars were dim, but its white fur still shone brilliantly. He waved his paw and pulled out a green bag from behind.

"Eh?"

Fang Yuan took the bag, smelt the fragrance and exclaimed, "Spiritual fertilizer! So much of it!!!"

Chapter 9: Guest

"Sizzle!"

In the middle of a clearing within Spirit Valley, a fire was lit. A whole chicken was being roasted on a spit, its golden brown skin crackling with oil. The aroma of chicken meat filled the air.

"Keke!"

By the fire, a large white ferret moved about impatiently.

"Relax! It's still early!"

Fang Yuan rotated the spit gingerly, sprinkling salt and pepper on the meat at intervals.

Ever since the deal, Fang Yuan had gradually grown accustomed to the presence of the white ferret.

After drinking the Questioning Heart Tea brewed via the Meditative Tea Ceremony, and eating a few Questioning Heart Tea leaves, the white ferret immediately lost interest in the Questioning Heart Tea tree. But the ferret also required Fang Yuan to brew tea for it daily.

In return, the ferret would bring spiritual fertiliser to Fang Yuan. Even better, the ferret would sometimes offer pheasants and rabbits that it had hunted down to Fang Yuan as tributes.

Fang Yuan was not stingy with the ferret either. He had planned to share half of his meat with the ferret after it was done roasting on the spit.

The ferret was used to ripping into its prey raw and had never eaten cooked food before. The taste of the cooked meat was complemented by the seasoning and Fang Yuan's roasting technique. Before long, cooked food became the white ferret's obsession.

These days, Fang Yuan would open his door every morning to

find that the ferret had lain wild game on his doorstep. He would never be in want for fresh meat again.

"Come on! The meat is ready!"

Fang Yuan tore the roasted chicken meat in half and threw it to the white ferret. The white ferret was ecstatic and in the blink of an eye, it had ripped into the meat and guzzled it down. It then licked its muzzle. It was apparent that it wanted more.

"Wow, that was fast..."

Fang Yuan was speechless. He bit into a chicken wing.

"Ahh, this tastes wonderful!"

The roasted chicken was not only aromatic, but the meat was tender and juicy. The chicken in question must have been living on pine nuts, hazelnuts and the like, for its meat had a herbal quality to it. It was no wonder that even Fang Yuan, a half-baked cook, was able to achieve such a great taste.

"You want some more?"

Fang Yuan took notice of the pleading gaze of the white ferret and threw him a piece of chicken thigh meat. The ferret received it excitedly and dug into it with great fervour.

"Don't just eat meat all the time. It's not very nutritious..."

Fang Yuan then took out the Crystal Rice and a few dishes. The white ferret could not withstand the sumptuous sight and beg for another bowl of rice. Fang Yuan was convinced that the white ferret's stomach was a bottomless pit.

Having eaten his fill, Fang Yuan crept up to the ferret, still preoccupied with its food, and traced his hand along its back.

The white ferret had the softest fur, smoother than silk of the highest quality, and Fang Yuan could not help but run his hands over its fine, velvety hair over and over again. Also, he was secretly glad that the ferret had begun to see him as a friend.

"Such a majestic and fearsome beast. If I manage to tame it, it would become a great protector of the Valley. No one would ever dare to trespass again!"

Fang Yuan had not forgotten that he had an unexpected enemy in the outside world.

"There is no other post-meal beverage better than tea..."

After finishing the last of the roast chicken, Fang Yuan smiled and went back into his hut to fetch a teapot.

The white ferret's eyes lit up immediately when it saw the teapot.

To the ferret, the roast chicken only satisfied its appetite, but the Questioning Heart Tea would heighten its senses and give it a new lease of life.

"Sizzle"

Tea, clear to the point of transparency, flowed into the teacup and gave off an amazing fragrance.

Fang Yuan cleared his sight and mind, settling into a familiar set of processes. The white ferret seemed to understand the importance of this procedure and sat cross-legged solemnly.

"Please help yourself!"

Fang Yuan offered the white ferret a cup.

Man and beast thus sat facing each other and had tea together. Both were enjoying it immensely.

"Hmm, I can sense the ferret's purity of heart. It seems as though it knows how to appreciate Master's Meditative Tea Ceremony..."

Fang Yuan was overjoyed.

This was reflective of Master Wenxin's joy at seeing Fang Yuan comprehend the teachings of the Tea Ceremony for the first time all those years ago.

"So this is what it means to pass on the torch. No wonder they say

that civilisation is inherited."

Fang Yuan exhaled and unexpectedly came into mental contact with a consciousness that was not his own. He sensed ignorance and curiosity, and he turned his head only to meet the questioning eyes of the ferret.

"Wow, I can actually feel the emotions of the white ferret?"

Fang Yuan suddenly snapped out of his trance and found that he was unable to re-enter this mysterious state of mind.

"If I could hold on longer to this mental state, perhaps I might be able to communicate with you directly one day!"

Fang Yuan ruffled the white ferret's crown and sighed.

It was a pity that Fang Yuan was a long way off from mastering this supernatural skill.

"Alright let's go! We need to add some fertiliser to the tea tree!"

Having sat down and contemplated for a while, Fang Yuan stood up and clapped his hands.

"Luckily you fetched me the Spiritual fertiliser, or we would not be able to enjoy this much tea with the natural yield of the tea tree..."

Fang Yuan walked to the tea tree and undid a pouch. He then reached into it and sprinkled bits of Spiritual fertiliser onto the base of the tea tree.

The ferret did its part by loosening the soil with its claws. Man and beast had achieved a comfortable rapport with each other.

To others, this was indeed a sight to behold.

"Ferret, shall I name you?"

"Keke?"

"Yeah. I remember from my dreamscapes a legendary ferret that was very powerful. It was a magical beast from the epic Investiture

of the Gods. It was said to resemble a white rat, was the size of an elephant and had wings, sharp teeth and claws. It was a ruthless beast and was a scourge to mankind. They called it the Flower Fox Ferret. Shall we call you that?"

"Keke?!"

"I'll take this as a yes, Flower Fox Ferret! Haha!"

Fang Yuan was extremely happy and he laughed heartily.

Beyond the Valley.

"Uncle Lin, does the Master that you speak of live here?"

The Zhou Siblings that Fang Yuan had met before were trekking in the forest with their house servants and Minister Lini. It was a long and gruelling trek indeed.

Zhou Wenxin, the spoilt young mistress of her noble household, was on the verge of tears. The mountain roads were winding and they seemed to never end.

"Ah Sister, you should have stayed at home and waited for my updates. There was really no need for you to come along."

Second Young Master Zhou (Zhou Erge) could not bear to see his sister suffer.

"I only wanted to do my part for Papa..."

"Hehe...my dears, we will arrive at the Valley shortly!"

Minister Lin looked as though he was in the pink of health, not breathless in the slightest. He chuckled.

"Master Wenxin was a true master. We regret that he has already passed on. However, he has left behind a disciple, who has at least inherited some of Master Wenxin's healing skills. He might not be the best physician there is, but he is pretty good..."

In truth, Minister Lin was not very confident of Fang Yuan's

competence either.

However, he was aware that Master Wenxin and his disciple were both adept at botany, and given that they lived in the mountains, they must have gathered some valuable herbs and spices over the years.

Minister Lin hoped to shamelessly acquire some of these medicinal resources for the Zhou Family so that they would owe him a favour.

"Lei Yue was accepted into the Spirit Returning Sect recently. I must get into her good books!"

Minster Lin had other things on his mind as well. Considering the state of his relations with Fang Yuan, it would be extremely awkward for them to meet.

"What? Only one disciple?"

Zhou Wenxin felt her anger rising, and was immediately held back by her brother.

"Uncle Lin has our best interests at heart. Have faith in Uncle Lin. Don't be rash!"

Zhou Erge then turned to Minister Lin sheepishly.

"I apologise on my sister's behalf. Please don't hold it against her!"

"Haha...your sister is such a bright and lively young lady. You must be proud of her!"

Minster Lin laughed outwardly in response, but he was secretly relieved that his few daughters were unlike Zhou Wenxin, or he would never enjoy peace in his household.

As conversation wore on, the group finally found themselves at the entrance of the Valley.

"My dear lad!"

Minister Lin had been hardened by his life experiences and was thick-skinned as a result. His loud and clear voice was carried by the wind into the distance.

"Oh? What is Minister Lin doing here?"

Fang Yuan was clearing weeds in the Red Cornfield and was baffled when he heard the call.

"I shall go take a look. Hide, Flower Fox Ferret! Remember, don't eat any of the corn sprouts!"

The Flower Fox Ferret was a magical creature. Fang Yuan saw it as his trump card and did not intend to alert anyone to its existence.

"Keke!"

The white ferret cocked its head to one side and glanced at the Valley entrance with disdain before disappearing into a nearby garden.

Fang Yuan watched the white ferret go before tidying himself up. He then went over to the Valley entrance to greet his guests.

"Ah, Uncle Lin. What brings you here again?"

"My dear lad. Let Uncle Lin introduce you to my two companions. This is..."

Minister Lin kept a wide smile plastered on his face as he spoke, but Zhou Wenxin's voice pierced the air without warning.

"You little thief!"

"Thief?!"

Minster Lin and Zhou Erge were stunned.

"Second Brother, it's him! He's the fellow who took advantage of me!"

Zhou Wenxin's features were coloured in a violent shade of red. She was so mad that she became incoherent.

"Young lady!"

Fang Yuan frowned. He obviously recognised this difficult young woman.

And her choice of words was misleading! How had he taken advantage of her if he had not even laid a finger on her?

"What are you guys waiting for ...get him!"

Zhou Wenxin exploded.

"Yes, Missy!"

The manservants moved forward aggressively.

"Wait! This must be a misunderstanding!"

Minister Lin rushed to position himself between the potential clash and calmly reasoned.

"I watched this young man grow up. I can vouch for his character!"

"You are...the kid who peddled the Red Mountain Ginseng the other day?"

Zhou Erge had recognised Fang Yuan too.

Second Young Master Zhou had sent men to get to the bottom of things that day and had been dumbfounded when he pieced together the whole picture.

To be fair, Fang Yuan was indeed blameless.

"Hehe...it must have been a mistake..."

Seeing that Minister Lin was trying his best to defuse the tension, Zhou Erge chipped in.

"Yes yes, let's talk this over!"

He was used to tolerating his sister's obstinate behaviour, but he had to proceed with tact this time round because he needed Fang Yuan's to do him a favour.

Chapter 10: The Trade

"Let me get straight to the point, virtuous young man. I am here today to request a favour from you!"

Minister Lin glanced towards a frustrated Zhou Wenxin, hesitated for a moment, then looked at Fang Yuan.

"My father is sick, and I have long heard of Young Master's impeccable medical skills. I have come to request for medicine!"

The second son in the Zhou Family had a good upbringing and was humble in requesting for the favour, "I hope Young Master would help us out, and the entire Zhou Family will be grateful to you!"

At his side, Zhou Wenxin wanted to say a few words of her own but thought twice after seeing her brother's strict expression.

'Never would I have thought that the incident at the town would come back and hound me...'

Fang Yuan remained silent.

He noticed the expensive clothing donned by the Zhou siblings, and also their servant with a large build. If Minister Lin was not here today, these people would never be so polite.

As for Minister Lin, the previous incident of annulling the marriage resulted in their friendship becoming weaker.

Unless Fang Yuan recruited the help of Flower Fox Ferret to kill all of them and run away, he could not avoid this situation.

'Until now, they are still oppressing me...'

Fang Yuan mulled silently, but instead said, "Brothers, you have arrived late. My Master, Master Wenxin is the true master of Medicine skills. And as for me? I only learnt a few basics from him, and before seeing your father, I cannot assess his condition..."

"You little mucker..."

He only thought of planning an escape route for himself, but unknowingly, Zhou Wenxin felt so unjust that she started to cry.

To her, the bullying act by Fang Yuan back at the town was the biggest insult she had received.

And now, even when they have approached him and humbly requested for his help, he still rejected them!

This made Zhou Wenxin very angry and pushed her to the brink of crying.

"Keke... You are too humble. Even though Master Wenxin is not around anymore, I could recall that you should have kept plenty of good quality herbs right? If only I could have one portion to aid my father in his recovery, that would be enough..."

Minister Lin smiled and rubbed his hands together.

On the other hand, Fang Yuan frowned and felt that he could not trust him.

Minister Lin and Fang Yuan's friendship was the strongest as if they understood each other perfectly well.

Fang Yuan was thankful that he was not Master Wenxin himself, otherwise if Minister Lin knew about the Questioning Heart Tea Tree, Fang Yuan would get into trouble.

"Eh? In our previous encounter, Young Master was selling Red Ginseng. Even though the Red Ginseng was not aged enough, the medicinal properties were shocking! After my father consumed it, his conditioned improved!"

Zhou Erge nodded his head as though he thought of something, and looked happy.

Fang Yuan rolled his eyes but did not want to sound untrustworthy in front of Minister Lin.

Fang Yuan was put in a spot. Half a day later, he responded, "Minister Lin knows that Master Wenxin and I have lived in the

secluded valley for less than 20 years, therefore the aged mountain herbs we have are all harvested by my Master from the deep mountains. There is a limited supply, and this is all we have now..."

"I also understand..."

Minister Lin felt embarrassed because he knew that Master Wenxin was a legend that could traverse the deep mountains and forest as though it was flat ground, but Fang Yuan? He could not have such abilities yet.

And therefore to eye on Fang Yuan's limited supply of mountain herbs was a little too much...

For the sake of Leiyue's future, he had no choice but to ask, "Virtuous young man, if you may have any request or anything that I can help you with, spill it out!"

"That's right, the Zhou Family announced that if Young Master is able to heal my father, whatever request you may have will be acceded to." Zhou Erge added.

"Then I shall say..."

Fang Yuan was delighted because this was what he really wanted. He was afraid that he would not get anything in return for the herbs that he would provide. A human favour was the most unreliable because one could forget about it any other day. Minister Lin was right to realize this and promised something in return.

"As for the precious herbs, I have the last stash here with me. It is a 60-year old aged Red Ginseng and is definitely real. But I cannot confirm that it will improve Old Zhou's condition, and therefore I will not request for anything. But because I am living in the deep mountains and forest, I would like to learn a few martial arts for self-defence. Therefore I hope that it would be possible to get a martial arts manual or something similar..."

"You want to learn martial arts?!"

Minister Lin appeared shocked, took a moment to observe the surrounding mountains and forest, and seemed to empathise a little.

As for the Zhou siblings, their facial expressions turned sour.

Seeing their reactions, Fang Yuan realised that they wrongly thought of him as the one who wants to secretly steal the Zhou Family's set of martial arts. He immediately waved his hands, "Of course, I only request the basic types of martial arts, only for self-defence. I would never hope for the most profound martial arts. If only Minister Lin gave me the most widely circulated, easiest-to-learn set of martial arts manual, that would be enough!"

"Oh, this... This is simple..."

Minister Lin stroked his beard, and deep down felt relieved.

If Fang Yuan requested for the Spirit Returning Sect's most profound set of martial arts, even if the Zhou Siblings agree, the Sect might not agree.

Only the most basic martial arts, with no specified type?

Considering how affluent the Zhou Family was, several skilled martial artists were recruited to protect their house. Putting together all their martial arts manual, they might have a few books.

Furthermore, these are the widely circulated ones, and therefore would not be any trouble to obtain.

"This request is simple, I shall agree to it on behalf of the Zhou Family! Just look for me whenever you want it!"

Minister Lin smiled to himself.

"Good, then that's a promise. A 60-year-old Red Ginseng, for a martial arts manual, not including others... Of course, this does not include Zhou Family's reward! This is only between Minister

Lin and me!"

Seeing how much effort Minister Lin put in, Fang Yuan understood that giving a favour to others would establish their relationship very clearly.

"Deal!"

The Zhou Siblings looked at one another and realised that they were in no position to talk, and could only witness the both of them agreeing to the deal.

For Zhou Wenxin, she unhappily mumbled a sentence, "Aren't you a little old to be learning martial arts? Keke... You don't even know about the 12 Golden Gates, and you still want to achieve something in martial arts?"

Her tone was a condescending one.

Fang Yuan remained calm as though he did not hear her. He secretly took a mental note of '12 Golden Gates' to find out about it in the future.

"Please follow me, Minister Lin!"

Fang Yuan open his the door of his storage and invited Minister Lin in. He did not attempt to stop the Zhou Siblings from following.

As long as the Questioning Heart Tea and Vermillion Jade Rice remained a secret, it does not matter if his stored medicine was being seen by others.

By letting them in, it would also dismiss any greedy thoughts that they might have.

Otherwise, in the future, wouldn't it be impractical if everyone who fell sick came over here to ask for herbs?

"Hmm, you kept the storage neat and tidy."

Within the storage room, a strong scent filled the air. Zhou Wenxin held her nose, but Minister Lin kept his hands at his back,

"This Jade Crystal Rice is the most special, and cultivated with the best methods. The last time I ate this rice, I did not have to worry about food and even the smell of meat could not entice me..."

"If Minister Lin likes it, then please help yourself to a few bags before leaving..."

Fang Yuan replied without looking back.

This scene reminded Zhou Wenxin of the first time she met Fang Yuan and made her feel embarrassed and angry at the same time.

All the way at the end of the storage room were rows of wooden racks, with many empty boxes at the top.

Fang Yuan walked to the right side of the room, took out a box and handed it over, "Minister Lin, please have it!"

Minister Lin received the box and opened it. It was a large ginseng, of deep red jadeite colour. It was preserved to perfection and of top-notch quality, and the best part of the ginseng was that none of its roots was flawed.

"Mmmm, very good! Very good!"

His eyes darted around the floor, and shook his head in disappointment, 'Looks like Master Wenxin's storage is indeed going to be empty soon.....'

"Good! Good! Good!"

Zhou Ergu took a quick look at the Red Ginseng and was ecstatic, "Its medicinal powers would be at least 60 years old since the medicinal value of a Red Ginseng goes up with its age. Red Ginsengs aged above 50 is a rarity! Father has hope now!"

"Mmm, please keep it properly..."

Seeing this Red Ginseng, Minister Lin felt reluctant, but still passed it to Zhou Erge for safekeeping, and told Fang Yuan, "Don't you worry, the martial arts manual that you requested will be delivered to you."

"Many thanks, Minister Lin!"

Fang Yuan clutched his fist and paid his compliments.

"Mmm, I shall take my leave!"

Staying after the deal would make things more awkward. Minister Lin, together with the Zhou Family, walk out and disappeared outside the valley.

"Keke?!"

Fang Yuan let out a long sigh as he watched them walk away.

At this moment, a white flash appeared and Flower Fox Ferret appeared again. It pointed its paws around and in its eyes, it seemed confused.

"This time you don't have to fight..."

Fang Yuan stroked Flower Fox Ferret's head, and mumbled to it, "Next time, without my presence, if anyone approaches the garden, go for the kill. Understood?"

Flower Fox Ferret was able to understand Fang Yuan's intentions, and like a human nodded his small head.

"I'm not sure if one Red Ginseng is able to cure Old Zhou's illness, and if it cannot be cured, then what happens afterwards would be a little troublesome..."

Fang Yuan took a look at the column of his own qualities:

"[Medicine (Level 1)] - Can heal simple wounds, including mild wounds, and with the aid of medicinal plants can achieve even better results."

"[Botany (Level 3)] - You are undoubtedly the professional in this field, harnessing unlimited potential. Through your plants, there is a slight chance that they might evolve to have special traits!"

"Mild wounds, I don't even know if Old Zhou's illness can be classified as mild... but with the aid of medicinal plants to achieve

better results, that is worth seeing if it will work..."

Fang Yuan now wanted to attain a higher level for his [Medicine].

Through experimenting in [Botany], it became clear to him that to attain a higher level, one needed to be proficient and undergo intense training.

His own [Botany] levelled up to Level 2 through numerous cultivation of plants, but without the help of the spiritual plants, he could never have attained Level 3.

To improve his [Medical], he would have to begin with a large number of patients.

"Hmm... the Zhou Family? Keke..."

Fang Yuan shook his head and remained silent.

Chapter 11: The Secret Manual

Minister Lin was a trustworthy person. Not long after, a small bag was delivered to the secluded mountains.

Maybe because he felt guilty, or maybe he felt that the basic martial arts weren't much trouble, so he delivered three manuals at one go, which surprised Fang Yuan.

He sat on an emerald rock, and with Flower Fox Ferret by his side, carefully flipped the pages of one of the manuals.

"Black Sand Palm?"

Fang Yuan flipped the manual and scanned the manual quickly. He noticed that even though the book seemed old, the wordings were written with much force, and some of it was blurred. The corner of some pages was torn, which showed how many generations the book was passed down from. This manual was simply an antique.

"I can't believe he sent the original copy to me, looks like Minister Lin did not have any intention to cheat me..."

Fang Yuan nodded his head.

These type of martial arts manuals had to be as accurate as possible because even the slightest deviation from copying to another copy might result in an entirely different result altogether, so the original copy was still the best.

Just by holding on to the manual, Fang Yuan was able to know the amount of effort the martial artist placed into compiling the manual.

"Hmm... Even the most basic martial arts getting widely circulated goes to show that it has its own unique points!"

The other two copies were in a similar condition to this manual, and this made Fang Yuan feel slightly ashamed. He only requested

for the most widely circulated ones because they were the easiest to verify.

Anyway, he was not allowed to practise martial arts if the manual was given by someone else. Afterall, learning martial arts was one of the easiest ways to lose control of one's conscious mind.

"It seems... I am guarding against others..."

Fang Yuan heaved a long sigh: "After all, I still have my medical skills. Even if I only research and not practice, I should be able to spot any problems. Compared to internal techniques, external techniques are better as it's quite difficult to go wrong with them, even if there are traps inside..."

Although this was known from another subject, it could also be used to prove the same theory.

He put down the manual and flipped the other two manuals.

"Eagle Claw Technique? It seems that the representative from the Spirit Returning Sect, Cold Face Steel Eagle, knew this technique. He probably knew the secret manual version of this technique, and would likely overpower the other widely circulated versions..."

Out of the three manuals, two of which taught external martial arts, and the last one taught a nameless technique. It focused on how to train one's body, increase tolerance to punches, and some breathing techniques as well. According to the author, once practised fully, holding a single breath would be able to take a hit from a normal weapon.

In the bag, there was also a small piece of paper, jotted on it the origins of these three books.

"Presenting the Black Sand Palm, the most widely circulated version of martial arts within Qinghe County."

"From villager Mengyuan, the Eagle Claw Technique. The most basic martial arts, but one will require a special set of Inner Power to be able to train to its highest level."

"The last book is the simplest set of breathing techniques, no, it is just some breathing techniques and methods to take hits from opponents, and it doesn't even have a name, so let's call it "Rough Breathing Technique..."

...

Fang Yuan realised that these three manuals were indeed the most widely circulated, and none of them was a treasure.

However basic a set of martial arts might be, it was also passed down from generations to generations with much thought put into it. Any normal person who was able to practise any type of martial arts would be able to defend oneself, so it was still worth cherishing the martial arts manual.

Using a 60-year-old Red Ginseng in exchange for these books was a fair trade.

"Considering how good the conditions of these manuals are... Minister Lin was still sincere."

Fang Yuan sighed and started to study each manual in detail.

Unknowingly, half a day went by and the sun began to set, with its rays scattering across the horizon.

"Keke!?"

"Keke?"

The Flower Fox Ferret saw how focused Fang Yuan was in studying the manuals, and became curious. It could not understand a single word written in the manuals and so it gave up trying to read it. The Flower Fox Ferret ran out into the forest, and not long after, dragged a large wild rabbit back and placed it in front of Fang Yuan.

"Haha... You only know about eating!"

Fang Yuan closed the last manual on the Rough Breathing Technique, looked at the Flower Fox Ferret and laughed.

The sky began to darken.

Next to the fireplace, Fang Yuan skinned the rabbit, marinated it and roasted it. He yanked out the thigh of the roasted rabbit and threw the remaining to the impatient Flower Fox Ferret. His mind was filled with the contents that he read about in the manuals.

'The world of martial arts seems to be of a higher level than the normal world... Black Sand Palm and Eagle Claw Technique are purely the outer power that can be stimulated with medicine. On the other hand, cultivating the inner power requires proper breathing techniques and patterns, or even focusing the mind... Regardless of the type of martial arts, there are always different levels of cultivation, and this is the 12 Golden Gates!'

This term '12 Golden Gates' was constantly repeated in all three manuals. Fang Yuan thought about it hard, and finally knew what it meant.

"Based on the theory of martial arts, the human body has unlimited potential. However, there are many mental barriers which restrict the use of maximum power. Therefore, the purpose of learning martial arts is to learn how to destroy these barriers to unleash one's potential!"

There were 12 of these barriers, as described in the manuals. This was why it was called the 12 Golden Gates.

Every time a martial artist broke through one of these gates, his strength would increase. The more gates that were broken through, the scarier it became.

After breaking all 12 Gates, one would attain the level of 'Wu Zong'!

There was only one such person alive, even within the Spirit Returning Sect.

"The 12 barriers within the human body... sounds similar to the 12 Meridians, 8 Veins in Medicine. Does that mean that the

cultivation of martial arts is actually to strengthen the meridian of the human body?"

"The 12 barriers represent 12 levels, and in order to attain Wu Zong, every single one must be broken! I can't imagine how clever Leiyue is!"

After understanding the difficulty in practising martial arts, Fang Yuan had some doubts.

His impression of Leiyue's martial arts was not of such a high level.

"At that point of time I couldn't understand martial arts, but Master should have noticed, that the marriage was a little too rushed....."

When he thought of Master Wenxin, Fang Yuan sighed.

Master Wenxin treated him fairly, and everything was for his own good. The only regret was that he passed on early.

If he was still alive and saw Minister Lin, how would he react?

After his thoughts, the roasted rabbit in his mouth became tasteless.

Fang Yuan stood up, tidied the place and prepared some tea in the moonlight.

While performing the Meditative Tea Ceremony, Fang Yuan reminisced Master Wenxin, and this was his unique way of keeping his Master in his memory.

"Hisss!?"

The Flower Fox Ferret seemed to understand Fang Yuan, and at the same time seemed like it could feel the sorrow in Fang Yuan, and did not appear as joyful as the past few times.

In the deep secluded valley, there was no sun and moon. Time passed quickly and it was dawn.

Fang Yuan woke up early, and as usual, drank his morning tea and proceeded to farm.

In the Vermillion Jade Rice farm, the shoots grew to his hip level, and fruits started to form at the top of the shoots, causing the shoots to bend.

Fang Yuan dissolved the spiritual fertilizer in the spring water and watered the plants with the water. A light fragrance filled the air.

"Keke!"

"Keke!"

The Flower Fox Ferret jumped around as though it was very excited.

Although the small shoots of the Vermillion Jade Rice did not catch its attention, the ripened Vermillion Jade Rice did make it excited.

"Remember, don't steal it!"

For this, Fang Yuan had to sternly remind it and brewed large amounts of tea for it to drink before being able to appease it.

"Previously we did not plant much, so it would be good if we can harvest more than 10 pounds. But after this, we can plant even more, and should consider expanding the farm..."

Fang Yuan was excited.

The speed at which the Spirited Red Corn germinated and grew was faster than expected.

It must have been due to the spiritual fertilizer that was brought by the Flower Fox Ferret, and also his [Botany], which resulted in the speedy growth.

"Don't worry, Flower Fox Ferret! Once we harvest it, I will let you have your fill! After all, credit goes to you for finding the spiritual fertilizer!"

Fang Yuan caressed the head of the Flower Fox Ferret, and comforted it: "And also, as for the spiritual tea, it's the second harvest already..."

He smiled and felt happy from his bountiful harvest.

Every day while patrolling the farm, Fang Yuan would stop by a hut and flip the martial arts manual on the table.

"I have already memorised these three manuals, and already cross-referenced with my [Medicine], and nothing seems to be wrong with it... should I start practising?"

Fang Yuan imagined himself trying out the moves, but adamantly shook his head: "No way! This is not safe! I am such a coward! The only plan is to go to the town, spend some money and get another one of these manuals to refer to, or pass it on to someone else to practice..."

Martial arts was not a normal thing, and therefore Fang Yuan had no confidence to practise it.

"The small thief is inside!"

"Surround him, don't let him run away!"

"Faster!"

...

Suddenly, a lot of noise came from outside, which confused Fang Yuan.

"What is it?"

He opened the door and saw a large group of men, furiously entering his home. Zhou Wenxin stood in front of the pack, looking proud.

"You small thief!"

Zhou Wenxin's old and new hatred for Fang Yuan grew as she saw him. Her voice became sharper: "You insulted me, and now

you used fake medicine on my father! I will not let you off today!"

With a wave of her hand, a few men rushed towards Fang Yuan, surrounding him.

Chapter 12: Poisonous Dragon Grass

Numerous hostile big-sized men surrounded Fang Yuan with wooden bats.

Under normal circumstances, one would have been beaten badly.

Fang Yuan hadn't started practising martial arts and hence would likely be beaten badly. However, he looked at these hostile men with a smile.

"You dare to smile still. Beat him till his bones break!"

"Hit!"

These men from the Zhou family were violent and rude.

Whizz!

A bright light appeared and flashed a few times in the area.

"Aaah!"

After which, a few screamings were heard.

When Zhou Wenxin came back to her senses, she realised all her bodyguards were defeated. She held her bleeding right arm tightly.

"What....what kind of power is this?"

Her face immediately turned white. When Fang Yuan started to approach her, she was so scared that she immediately retreated and said, "Don't....do not come near me!"

"Miss Zhou, I made a deal with Uncle Lin. The medicine was approved by him, so who told you the medicine was fake?"

Fang Yuan slowly approached her with a cold look. If he had a Flower Fox Ferret with him, the consequences for Miss Zhou would have been even worse.

"Wuahhh!"

Zhou Wenxin tripped and fell while retreating. She began crying,

"Oooooo..... you're a bully!"

"Bullshit!"

Fang Yuan was left speechless.

These men were obviously hostile in nature and why were they hired as bodyguards?

"Speak now, or you will end up like them!"

Fang Yuan intimidated her by kicking one of the downed men.

From the scream, Zhou Wenxin immediately stopped crying and said, "It....It was Song Zhigao who said it!"

"Who is Song Zhigao?"

"A comprador of the Spirit Returning Sect!"

.....

Through Fang Yuan's method of interrogation, the arrogant Zhou Wenxin was able to spit out the truth and reveal everything.

According to her, after obtaining the Red Mountain Ginseng from the previous deal, the siblings happily gave it to Old Zhou.

Old Zhou did recover from his illness and got better, but not for long. His condition deteriorated and until now, no medicine could help to cure his illness!

Of course, [Zhou Erge](#) and Lin Benchu understood that it was not that Fang Yuan's Red Mountain Ginseng was not effective. However, due to her bad temper, how could Zhou Wenxin have understood?

Plus, the Zhou family was close to Song Zhigao and Song Zhigao started questioning the effectiveness of the Red Mountain Ginseng.

"Song Zhigao? The one that is in charge of external trade?"

Fang Yuan touched his chin and recalled something vaguely.

"I have not met or heard about this man before. No offence, but

I'm guessing it is likely Leiyue's marriage that is creating this mess...."

Had one known that the marriage would create such a mess, one would not have accepted the marriage no matter what.

"You have said what others had said. Now can you let me go...."

At that moment, Zhou Wenxin was tearing and seemed pitiful instead of unruly.

How did it look for a lady from a wealthy family to be defeated in the mountains?

Anyway, Fang Yuan said his age is definitely bigger than hers.

"You can leave now! Bring your men along with you as well!"

Fang Yuan's true colours had been seen by many. He couldn't bear to kill one and destroy the traces of the murder. He then gave cold look.

"Leave now!"

Zhou Wenxin and her bodyguard retreated immediately as if there was a big flood that was charging towards them.

In their minds, Fang Yuan, who could now defeat so many strong men is no different from a magician who practices dark magic in the mountains.

.....

"Keke?"

Flower Fox Ferret appeared after they left. It went round and round around Fang Yuan as if it was asking for a treat.

"You did well! The main point is that your speed....became even faster!"

Since then at the farm, Fang Yuan was able to see Flower Fox Ferret's full power for the first time. The previous Flower Fox Ferret escaped and only its shadow could be seen.

Till now, it seemed that it was because of the spiritual tea that improved the speed. The speed was so fast that those downed bodyguards didn't even know what attacked them.

Even though Fang Yuan has requested to go easy on them, those bodyguards were still attacked quite badly.

"Luckily you were not too hard on them just now, if not....."

He touched the Flower Fox Ferret's head, with his mind lingering with fear.

The Flower Fox Ferret comfortably close its eyes and raise its paws, as if it was saying, "There is no one I cannot defeat!"

Fang Yuan couldn't help but laugh at the Flower Fox Ferret's posture.

.....

"Even though the Flower Fox Ferret is very powerful, according to a manual, one may still be able to track the Flower Fox Ferret's location even if the Flower Fox Ferret is able to defeat a very good martial artist with its skills that are way beyond a normal human being!"

Inside the secluded valley, Fang Yuan was reading Black Sand Palm's secret manual.

At the moment, the Flower Fox Ferret could be considered one of the great martial artists.

The men Zhou Wenxin brought last week were lowly-skilled in terms of martial arts. They were not considered the ones who really practice martial arts even if they had learnt a few moves.

Based on the ability of the Zhou family, they should have the good ones.

Fang Yuan then may not be confident enough to defeat the better ones when Zhou Wenxin returned next time with them.

"My Red Mountain Ginseng should not be a problem. If Old Zhou

had a problem with his vitality, his condition shouldn't deteriorate after consuming the Red Mountain Ginseng!"

Fang Yuan was naturally confident about his products.

"Then....his injuries is definitely linked to something else!"

He admired Lin Benchu's courage for dealing with such muddy water with just his bare arms.

"The main point is that when you jump, you somehow got my whole body in mud as well!"

Fang Yuan showed a slight resentment.

In fact, this was a positive solution to the problem, but Fang Yuan was not willing to execute it.

As to the reason why is because.....

He had trekked out of the mountains once this year already and he didn't want to do it again. Plus, it was too troublesome to find the culprit while curing the illness.

Fang Yuan yawned a few times and decided to go for a nap.

.....

"Flower Fox Ferret, my life will depend on you if I was to be running away for my life next time!"

Half a day had gone. Fang Yuan carried his bamboo basket and continued trekking in the mountains. He envied the Flower Fox Ferret when meeting one along the way.

The secluded valley was linked to the mountains and there was no risk of an ambush especially when Master Wenxin built the houses. He left a few escape roads purposely and only Fang Yuan knew these roads.

Fang Yuan strongly believed that Master Wenxin probably had made a grave mistake elsewhere and was cautious of his survival ever since, which resulted in Master Wenxin creating a few escape

roads.

However, due to Master Wenxin's works, Fang Yuan was able to sleep peacefully every day without having to worry about any danger.

Looking at how the Flower Fox Ferret was able to run freely in the forest, Fang Yuan joked about it but was also regretful.

If the white ferret had been big enough to be ridden, Fang Yuan can travel and explore the whole Clear Spirit Mountain. That would have been a great thing to do.

Trekking the mountains was physically demanding, especially when trekking deep in the mountains and the old forests, where there were no small rocky pathways but full of dangerous animals and poisonous insects.

Fang Yuan used his knife to remove the thorns and tall plants that were in the way. He then continued on while panting.

These few days he used all kinds of coercion to lure the Flower Fox Ferret to bring him deep into the mountains to find the Spiritual Fertilizer.

He suspected that the Flower Fox Ferret had been tricking him. Ever since he entered deep into the mountains, he only encountered a few rare herbs and medicine but could not find the Spiritual Fertilizer.

"Don't quibble with me, Flower Fox Ferret. Judging from the amount you had brought, there should still be a good amount of Spiritual Fertilizer left!"

Fang Yuan looked at the sky and stopped trekking. He found a big rock to sit down, passed one of his rice balls to the Flower Fox Ferret and then started eating.

"Keke! Keke!"

The Flower Fox Ferret carried the rice ball around and then bit

the rice ball like a squirrel. It finished the rice ball quickly and then started gesturing using its paws.

After a long time trying to figure out what its gesture meant, Fang Yuan managed to understand what the Flower Fox Ferret was trying to say, "So I cannot go there yet? I can only find the good stuff nearby?"

He looked over his shoulders and eyed a number of rare herbs and medicine that he had collected today. He managed to agree with the idea, "Alright, we will go back home after going there for a while more! The rare herbs and medicine collected must be locked up somewhere safe or else it will be a waste to lose them!"

After gulping down a mouthful of spring water, Fang Yuan was recharged and ready to trek with the Flower Fox Ferret. They then reach a depression where there was full of fog.

"Well.... This place is full of miasma and poisonous fog!"

Fang Yuan then saw some colour in the fog and frowned. He immediately applied some of Master Wenxin's medicine onto his nose.

Hunters and herb collectors who trekked this far into the mountains would have such medicine to apply, but the medicine made by Master Wenxin had the best remedy.

"Keke!"

The Flower Fox Ferret seemed quite anxious.

"Haha.... What is the issue?"

Fang Yuan happily followed it and breathed in, "Poisonous Dragon Grass?!"

In front of him lay a small pool with white rocks around it. A purple herb was in sight.

This expensive herb was mentioned by Master Wenxin before. Such herb grew in toxic places and was highly effective in dealing

with other poisons when it was used as medicine. Many serious antidote prescription required such a herb.

"Good herb!"

Fang Yuan's eyes glittered but did not move.

Waiting for this herb was equivalent to getting half of it as there could be animals nearby guarding this herb!

Zhou Erge and Zhou Wenwu are the same person

Chapter 13: Fisherman

"Hiss!"

After the Poisonous Dragon Grass was found, the Flower Fox Ferret started making a hissing sound to indicate there was danger approaching. The Flower Fox Ferret's fur rose and its back became arched like a bow.

"Hiss!"

At that moment, Fang Yuan heard a sound from a pile of white rocks and a black long animal came crawling out with half of its body raised. It showed hostility while showing its purple-red coloured tongue.

"Is this....a snake?"

He was shocked by the sudden presence of the snake.

This snake was about 3 feet long and as wide as a thumb. The black scales on it was glittering. What caught his eye was its white tail which was like a pearl necklace. Its fangs were sharp and there was a big bulge on top of its head. The bulge was like a purple pearl showing a bit of glitter.

"Pearl Tail Snake?"

Fang Yuan recalled what Master Wenxin mentioned and linked the different types of the very poisonous living matter that existed in the Clear Spirit Mountain. "Definitely....not a normal Pearl Tail Snake as this black one is way longer. Plus, the black one has an additional bulge on top of its head....perhaps because of mutation?"

He was very sure that this black snake was neither a spiritual animal nor just a normal Pearl Tail Snake.

"Hiss!"

At that moment, the Flower Fox Ferret showed its claws and

started moving forward.

Seeing a white furred Flower Fox Ferret, this mutated Pearl Tail Snake seemed to be afraid of the Flower Fox Ferret. It then curled into a circle, with its head popping out.

"Yes....Flower Fox Ferrets are naturally enemies with snakes. Since this ferret is a Spiritual beast and has the effects of the spiritual tea, it should be able to defeat the snake...."

Pearl Tail Snake was extremely poisonous and Fang Yuan was definitely no match for the snake with just his knife and the antidote. He immediately went to hide and anxiously oversaw the situation.

Both beasts stared at each other for a while. Suddenly, the Flower Fox Ferret moved a few steps.

"Hiss!"

The Pearl Tail Snake started spitting out translucent liquid, like shooting an arrow, from its fangs.

"Spitting poison?"

Fang Yuan was watching frantically at the side, knowing that he was unlikely to dodge away from the poison if he was the one dueling.

At that moment, the Flower Fox Ferret was in mid-air and dodged away from the poison quickly like the speed of lightning. The Flower Fox Ferret then moved to the pile of white rocks and then clenched onto the neck of the Pearl Tail Snake using its front claws. The tail of the Pearl Tail Snake was left wrapping around and the Flower Fox Ferret, showing its sharp teeth, took this chance to take a bite around the neck.

Kacha!

The head of the Pearl Tail Snake dropped with just one bite from the Flower Fox Ferret.

"Well done!"

Fang Yuan came over and celebrated.

He went to look for the place where the poison landed from the Pearl Tail Snake. The place became burnt, with the rocks being disintegrated into pieces.

"Not bad Flower Fox Ferret!"

Fang Yuan complimented the Flower Fox Ferret and carefully kept the Poisonous Dragon Grass. "Combine this with the Three Star Grass, a leaf and this Pearl Tail Snake....The ingredients for Master's 'Yama's Order' would be complete!"

The name of this medicine sounded scary, but in fact is a detoxification medicine, which can detoxify many types of poison. This medicine can even save one's life who was almost dying from poison.

"Hey! Stop eating so much, I still need the snake!"

After the quarrel, Fang Yuan silently looked at the Flower Fox Ferret carrying the Pearl Tail Snake. The snake was bitten into half like a sugar cane. The Flower Fox Ferret dug out a purple green snake bile and swallowed it down.

"Luckily, the poisonous capsules are still inside...."

Fang Yuan went to check again and was relieved.

Knowing that even though how divine the Flower Fox Ferret was, when facing such mutated Pearl Tail Snake with extreme poison, the Flower Fox Ferret was cautious when eating the Pearl Tail Snake.

.....

"Even though this time when I enter the mountains, I cannot find the Spiritual Fertilizer but I manage to gather all the ingredients for Yama's Order. I can start to prepare this medicine when I get back...."

On the way back home, Fang Yuan's mood was great.

Even though the effect of Yama's Order is very strong, the process of making it is not really complicated. Only a few types of ingredients were needed in ratio. Mixing and tanning of these ingredients would then produce the medicine. The only difficult part was getting the ingredients as they were rare.

"With this medicine, it will be much more convenient when I go travel next time...."

Fang Yuan pondered his face changed suddenly.

A broken tree appeared suddenly in front of him. The tree, which was as wide as one's waist, was truncated at the middle portion.

This was nothing but what was strange was that a very clear palm print was on the truncated portion of the tree!

"Definitely a person, but someone with such strength?!"

Fang Yuan became alert and found some footprints of a wolf pack. "The wolves fought all the way till the Clear Spirit Mountain here?"

"Hiss!"

The white Flower Fox Ferret became tense up as well after seeing the wolves' tracks.

"Let's go and have a look!"

Fang Yuan was a young adult and out of curiosity, wanted to find out what happened.

The Flower Fox Ferret sniffed the ground and then went off in a direction.

Fang Yuan went after it closely but along the way, he saw even more footprints and traces of blood.

"Judging from the scene, definitely one is chasing the other...."

Fang Yuan was cautious and slowed down his footsteps even

more when he heard noises coming from ahead.

"Han Shou....a traitor....."

Along with the wind blowing from the mountains, a series of human voice could be heard vaguely.

Fang Yuan didn't dare to charge to the front. He observed his surroundings and then climbed up onto a big tree. He used the massive size of the canopy of the tree as a cover and observed from above.

He was lucky as it was just a piece of grassland further up front. He saw 2 people fighting, one in white while the other in black. Both of them didn't seem to know that they were being watched.

"Master....I was wrong. Please spare me...."

Fang Yuan came at the wrong time as the fight seemed to be ending. The one in black was punched at the middle of his chest. He began spitting out big pool of blood and then kneeled down to beg for forgiveness.

After seeing what happened, Fang Yuan felt that his faith in great martial artists were destroyed.

"Hey....it seems that skilled martial artists need not have a good character..... Previously they could fight with no regard for their lives. But the moment when he was losing he immediately knelt and beg for his life to be spared..."

Being an observer, he only thought about himself and did not think from the perspectives of these martial artists.

After the one in black kneeled down, the one in white seemed to hesitate while raising his right hand. His face turned red and started scolding loudly.

Fang Yuan could only hear the 2 words 'traitor' and 'treasure' vaguely. He couldn't catch the rest of the sentence.

Just when he was about to leave since he thought the show had

ended, something happened!

The man in black suddenly gave a strong punch to the chest of the man in white.

Kacha!

The sound of fractures was so deafening that Fang Yuan could hear it very clearly. The man in white then returned with another punch onto the man in black. The man in black was now injured badly, but was spitting out blood and laughing, making him looked arrogant.

"That man is ruthless!"

Fang Yuan was amazed by the comeback. "That comeback was a big turnover!"

At that moment, the man in black stumbled forward to the dead man in white and seemed to be looking for something. However, the man in black went down as well.

"What? Both parties are defeated? Looks like the man in white is more skilled than the other as he managed to injure the other one before he die!"

Fang Yuan hurried down the tree and went to the edge of the fighting zone, but didn't dare to move any nearer.

The fight between the two and the damage they had caused scared him a little, hence he didn't dare to move closer.

The man in black who survived was especially cunning. What if he realised that he was being watched the whole time and decided to pretend to be dead, wouldn't it be Fang Yuan walking into his own grave if he decided to recover the bodies?

Upon consideration, Fang Yuan picked up a rock and threw it on the man in black.

Bang!

There was no reaction.

He picked and threw another again!

Bang!

There was no reaction still.

Fang Yuan became suspicious and picked a very large rock. He used all his strength and manage to throw it on the man in black.

The sound of a bone fracture was heard.....

"Still no reaction? Or is it because he was seriously injured?"

Fang Yuan saw a pool of blood flowing and was forming a small creek.

"Flower Fox Ferret, go and bite his neck gently!"

Fang Yuan gestured for a long time to the Flower Fox Ferret before it went forward to hold the man in black by the neck. Fang Yuan then slowly went nearer to check.

The man in white had already become a corpse. He looked simple and honest, looked like he was in his 30s.

However, the man in black, who looked okay, had a slightly sharp chin, making him look slight ruthless. At that point, his face was as white as paper. His chest had depression, along with fractured ribs and leg.

"This man is ruthless....however, he is still useful...."

Fang Yuan began searching the 2 men. He found nothing from the man in black and then cursed him silently. Flintstones, a golden leaf and 2 bottles of good medicine were found in the pocket of the man in white. These things were probably what the man in black was looking for but unfortunately, he fainted due to his serious injuries.

"This medicine should be good and well known elsewhere. Unfortunately, I don't know this medicine personally...."

After an intensive search, Fang Yuan couldn't find any martial

arts manual that he wanted badly. He then looked at the mess the man in black made and hesitated.

He bit his teeth and decided to dig a grave to bury the man in white. He looked at the man in black again and had mixed feelings.

.....

"Don't....Don't come any closer!"

He dreamt of his senior brother being covered in blood, came pleading to survive.

Han Shou screamed and then woke up from his dream.

He was lying on a wooden bed, which had a slight soft curvature to it. There were many wooden furnitures around him and the place looked simple.

To him, who had been so close to death, this place was like heaven.

"What happen? Didn't I...."

Han Shou quivered and struggled to get up. However, he was injured so badly that there was intense pain at his chest and his leg. He couldn't help but felt everything that happened was strange.

He could remember vividly that he was punched in the chest with great force by his senior brother, but he just couldn't figure out why his leg was injured badly as well?

Plus, how did he end up here? What was this place?

"You are finally awake?"

The creaking sound of the door opening revealed a normal looking young adult carrying a bowl of medicine into the room. Heaving a sigh of relief, he said "The other day I was collecting medicine and found you injured by chance. I was scared to death but luckily thank god...."

He helped Han Shou to get up and wanted to feed him medicine.

Han Shou managed to sit upright. He realised his clothes and his right boot were untouched, then heaved a sigh of relief.

Chapter 14: Mixed Poison

"I came here to pluck herbs. There was so much blood and even a corpse! I was so scared..."

The young man continued to rattle on, appearing a little silly.

Han Shou was a martial artist and therefore could tell that there was no poison in the medicine prepared. He took a few sips and felt warmth in his stomach, but gazed at the young man with a sinister look.

Although the young man saved his life, in order to keep his secret safe, Han Shou decided to kill him after recovering.

He appeared thankful, "The few of us brothers encountered such a disaster, and I am so thankful to have been rescued by you young man, you mentioned a corpse... Could it be my elder brother... is he dead?"

Han Shou face was filled with sorrow and started to tear up, as though he had real emotions. Fang Yuan felt rather impressed at his acting.

"Hmm... There was no choice, I have already buried your elder brother. When you have recovered, I shall bring you to where I buried him for you collect his bones..." Fang Yuan comforted.

"I couldn't be more thankful, my benefactor! Even if both of us brothers reincarnate as animals in our next lives, we will also repay your kind favour!"

Han Shou remained unaware and continued acting.

"Keke... No need, no need!"

Fang Yuan scratched his head and smiled.

Han Shou was no different from a vegetable. Every time he moved he would require Fang Yuan's assistance, and therefore could not plot anything against Fang Yuan now.

After observing the surroundings, Han Shou realised that there was nothing else around the place and felt relieved. He noticed Fang Yuan reading a manual and out of curiosity, asked, "What are you reading, my brother?"

"This is a treasure passed down from my father!"

Fang Yuan passed the book forward, "It's just that I don't recognise some of these words..."

He looked at Han Shou, with embarrassment in his face, "Can you explain it to me?"

"Mmm... tendons, bones, claws and joints, the tendons are the most important. In the same way as how an eagle uses its claws, quick and deadly... Isn't this the Eagle Claw Technique?"

Han Shou read a few more lines, but inside he felt that this was a total waste of time.

Seeing how excited Fang Yuan was, he smirked and said, "This is a secret manual, I don't think it's a good idea for me to read on!"

"Since I cannot understand it, how about you teach me!"

Fang Yuan forced a look of excitement.

'Mmm, you chose this path of no return, don't blame me!'

Han Shou thought to himself, but felt that he had to repay the favour, "Since you saved my life, reading a few words shouldn't matter right?"

"This is great, so how do I interpret these few words?"

Fang Yuan acted as though he was interested.

"Mmm, this is Guan Yuan, it represents an acupoint on the body!"

"What about this?"

"Gu Hai!"

"Qi Yuan!"

...

Han Shou explained casually, but in his mind, he was mocking him.

If Fang Yuan followed the instructions of Han Shou, he would lose his self-control while practising this set of martial arts.

'This person... He is really evil!'

Fang Yuan thought back, 'On the contrary, Minister Lin's manuals were the ones with no problem.'

His theory was simple. He was literate since he was able to attain his [Medicine]. If the manuals Minister Lin provided had problems, based on Han Shou's experience he would be able to tell.

But now, Han Shou was intentionally twisting the meaning within the manual, in the process showing that the manuals had no problem.

"How do I read this word, Brother Han?"

Fang Yuan played along.

"Oh this, Nian Ming Men, a vital point on the body!" Han Shou replied casually.

"Wait, how did you know that my surname is Han?"

"Not only that, you interpreted the same thing differently from before!"

Fang Yuan took a step back and smiled.

Han Shou face reddened and knew that under such circumstances if he spoke and explained himself without much thought, he would expose himself.

At the moment, his expression changes, "You tricked me?"

"Han Shou, you scum, you are no better!"

Fang Yuan took a few more steps back and shouted.

"Go and die, you sneaky kid!"

Han Shou recovered quickly and equipped himself with a copper button. If anyone approached him, he could use his final breath and kill Fang Yuan. Never would he have thought that Fang Yuan was so sneaky and disappeared in the blink of an eye.

"Wait, it is all my fault. If you would continue healing me, I would be willing to pass down my divine martial arts to you!"

Now that Han Shou was weaker than Fang Yuan, even if he doesn't burn down the place, Han Shou would die of hunger if Fang Yuan simply did not serve him food, therefore he had to back down.

"It's alright. You tried to trick me even with these basic martial arts! How would I dare to learn your 'divine martial arts'?"

Fang Yuan sounded sarcastic, "Brother Han, with your amazing abilities, you should just walk into your grave."

Han Shou was far more scheming and skilful than Fang Yuan.

Therefore, Fang Yuan was afraid that Han Shou would recover quickly even though his condition seemed bad. It was best to kill Han Shou straight away.

He would rather practise the basic martial arts than try to learn from Han Shou and risk getting harmed.

"You are good!"

Han Shou rolled his eyes, plotting a scheme in the meantime.

Fang Yuan's voice was heard from afar, "Mister Han, you don't have to think of anything already, because your life is now in my hands!"

"In your hands?!"

Han Shou snickered, "The medicinal soup had no problems, how would I..."

He stopped halfway.

He recalled that he was all under Fan Yuan's control while he was unconscious. This meant that Fang Yuan could do anything he wanted to him, right?

"You're right. I placed some Qiluo Xiang in your bandage. This Qiluo Xiang can cleanse the wound and stop the bleeding. But if it comes in contact with Canhe Zi from the medicinal soup I gave you, you would experience some stiffness in your muscles, and in some parts, even rotting..."

"Mixed poison?!"

Han Shou looked solemn, took a deep breath, and indeed, felt stiffness in his limbs. He forced a smile.

No matter how clever he was, he was still a normal person. How would he know the potential of a martial artist who had already broken through the 5 Golden Gates?

Just a petty mixed poison would do no harm to his body and disappear after a few hours, considering his Inner Power.

The most important thing to do now was to find a way to deal with Fang Yuan, or at least, buy some time for himself.

"Oh? You seem to have a lot of confidence in yourself!"

Fang Yuan's voiced travelled in, and sounded surprised, "It seems that top martial artists have such confidence to deal with this type of poison?"

Han Shou suddenly felt helpless.

Fang Yuan did not sound fearful of scared.

On the other hand for himself, he was temporarily keeping the poison under control. But now, the feeling of stiffness came back, and there were obvious signs of rotting on his skin.

"I had forgotten to mention... My own concoction of poison, with some added ingredients, has an amplified effect!"

Hearing screams from the room, Fang Yuan remained calm, and took a look at his stats:

"Name: Fang Yuan

Essence: 1

Spirit: 1

Magic: 1.4

Age: 18

Cultivation: None

Techniques: None

Skills: [Medicine (Level 1)], [Botany (Level 3)]"

"[Medicine (Level 1)] - Can heal simple wounds, including mild wounds, and with the aid of medicinal plants can achieve even better results."

"Apart from healing, on the other hand, I would be more skilled in making poison! However, the most crucial ingredient is still the poison of the Pearl Tail Snake right?"

After a short while, the house was dead silent, apart from the sound of meat rotting.

Fang Yuan covered his nose, entered and witnessed a rotten corpse with holes and maggots around, and a pool of bodily fluid on the ground.

"How's the effect?"

Such a shocking effect even stunned Fang Yuan, " At least it solved the problem of dealing with the corpse..."

He picked up his clothing and prepared to burn them all to remove all traces.

Han Shou had an impressive origin, which meant trouble would come. Fang Yuan wanted to clean the mess up and cut all ties with Han Shou.

"But.....What treasure are they fighting over?"

He saw Han Shou's boots and smiled.

He kept it so well hidden that if not for him looking at his boots the moment he became conscious, Fang Yuan would not have know where to look for it.

He immediately went up to the pair of boots, took out a dagger and cut it up into 8 pieces.

In the sole of the right boot, a piece of black leather appeared.

"This is the treasure which caused the brothers to fight each other with their lives?"

Fang Yuan looked at the lines on the black leather and guessed, "A treasure map? It seems torn... Creepy..."

This leather was hidden very well and was only discovered after cutting the boots up, which explained how valuable this object was to Han Shou.

But it was just a torn map, what use could it have?

Fang Yuan did not understand but still decided to keep it anyway. He burned Han Shou's belongings and washed up the place.

From then, Han Shou had disappeared from the face of the planet.

"I had forgotten to ask him which Sect he belonged to, but I believe there is only one Sect nearby, the Spirit Returning Sect?"

After burning his corpse, Fang Yuan let his mind run wild. "It was such a pity that I wasn't able to obtain the divine martial arts manual, but seeing how things went, I guess it was still worth it."

Chapter 15: Making Amends

Within the deep valley.

In the early morning, Fang Yuan gathered an iron pot, boiled the spring water, added fine sand and herbs, and allowed the concoction to boil.

"The Black Sand Palm requires the use of specific herbs, allowing those herbs to be absorbed into the body...together with style, technique, perfecting it would allow one to split rocks and be invincible....."

The 3 scrolls were checked by Fang Yuan, who confirmed that there was no problem. It was also checked by Han Shou. Now it was finally time to train.

"Within the martial arts world, there are the 12 Golden Gates of cultivation, perfecting the Black Sand Palm would allow us to reach the level of the 5th gate at most..."

That was the limit of the Black Sand Palm, which was also the difference between normal martial arts and magic.

"The Eagle Claw Technique is even worse, only allowing us to reach the 3rd gate, after which it requires special mental cultivation. However, if it was attained, it would be sufficient to overcome the restraints, allowing one to reach the 8th gate. It is considered not bad within the sect..."

Fang Yuan carefully arranged the information obtained from his own scrolls.

"There is the Rough Breathing Technique still. While there is some vested interest, I am afraid not even the original creator knew what level the technique could reach. He failed to overcome 6th gate, the Pain Gate, resulting in his death..."

Fang Yuan sighed.

Every stage of the 12 Golden Locks was complicated with multiple obstacles.

"Out of the 12 Golden Locks, I only know the first 8 gates: Initial, Rest, Life, Restriction, View, Pain, Shock, and Death! There are still subdivisions within these. The first 3 gates, Initial, Rest, Life, once overcome, would result in the growth of the person, Failing to overcome gates is not a problem. For the foundation of martial arts, the two gates, Restriction and View would cause trouble. However, failing to overcome these gates would not cause much harm to the body, for the last 3 gates, once the martial artist is unsuccessful in overcoming the gates, he would suffer backlashes or even death! This is especially true for the 8th gate, the Death Gate which must be overcome in one shot as failure will result in death!"

It was never easy to practice and cultivate.

"The first 8 gates are already so formidable, and the last 4 gates are rumoured to be of another level. No one knows the realm that the Wu Zong above the 4 gates is in either."

Fang Yuan let out a faint sigh.

"According to legend, there are more roads to cultivation, with more unimaginable, unbelievable masters that are more highly skilled than the martial artists..."

Fang Yuan suddenly yearned for a new goal in his heart.

While he did not have many ambitions, the thought of becoming a deity, never to grow old and die, being happy and carefree was not bad.

"Furthermore, I do need some power to protect myself!"

With the sand herbs done, the fine sand which was originally exquisite and white turned black in colour, emitting the scent of the herb. Fang Yuan found a rough cloth and delicately kept the sand.

"The Eagle Claw Technique does not combine mental cultivation and internal energy, at most reaching the 3rd gate, which makes it very commonplace..."

"The Rough Breath Technique was self-created, not many practices it. The original creator himself died when he was unsuccessful in overcoming the stage... It can only reach the 5th stage at most..."

According to the scrolls and Fang Yuan's own deduction, the first three gates were mainstream and the martial artists were good at overcoming the stages.

Those who were able to overcome the 4th and the 5th gates were rare, well-off and commanded high positions in society.

Those who were able to overcome the Pain Gate were considered to be highly skilled and geniuses within the sects.

"The first 8 gates are already so formidable, what about the last 4 gates and the realm of Wu Zong above them...."

Fang Yuan let out a long sigh, well-aware that the Spirit Returning Sect dominated the area and was not dependent on weaponry.

One Wu Zong would be sufficient to suppress everything!

"The world is so big, Clear Spirit Mountain is but one corner of the world, I must continuously cultivate and improve myself if I want to explore and understand the world..."

While Fang Yuan might be indifferent and lazy, once he set his mind on something, he would focus all his effort in achieving his target.

"The Black Sand Palm is the most suitable for me!"

All he needed was a skill which would enable him to overcome the stage, where could he find the skill which would not corrupt him?

"Sigh...."

Looking at the previously-filled sandbag in front of him, Fang Yuan inhaled deeply: "Palm slam!"

Bang!

His palm strike left a print on the sandbag. He temporarily felt a burning pain in the back of his hand.

"Training is hard, even though my master forced me to train in the past, I might still escape from it..."

10 Strikes!

50 Strikes!

100 Strikes!

500 strikes!!

Fang Yuan finally drew back both hands after a thousand palm strikes, looking at the blisters on his palms, both palms stinging, yet feeling the cooling sensation of the herbs entering his hands.

"Sigh..."

Fang Yuan dared not neglect his hands and dipped his hands into the basin of water that he had previously prepared.

"While training the Black Sand Palm, one must not interrupt the effects of the herbs, especially the last healing procedure. Without this, one would become useless."

After half an hour, Fang Yuan discarded the water that turned black and placed a new basin of fresh water.

"It's lucky that the herbs are commonly found in large amount in my valley..."

"Keke!"

The Flower Fox Ferret, which had been observing and yawning for half the day, suddenly ran to the side and took a sniff at the discarded herbs solution. It gave a look of disdain and walked off.

The actions of the Flower Fox Ferret reminded Fang Yuan of a human.

"Okay, Flower Fox Ferret, stop messing around, I will prepare grilled meat for you!"

Fang Yuan scolded while laughing before looking at both of his hands.

After soaking his hands in the water, the burning pain subsided. His palms felt cool, the blisters healed and the dead skin peeled off.

"According to the manuals, once the Black Sand Palm is perfected, one's palms would be even smoother and paler than that of a young maiden. However, once the skill is activated, the palms would instantly become as tough as steel, enabling the user to split rocks and even increase the damage dealt by poison to the body..."

"From today onwards, I will dedicate 6 hours to honing the Black Sand Palm. I am unsure if it would be enough to overcome the gate..."

Fang Yuan felt somewhat helpless looking at his own stats.

It was no easy feat to be selected and chosen in this system.

"If I am able to master the Black Sand Palm technique, it would be acknowledged even if it just overcome the first stage? "

Fang Yuan thought, immensely proud of himself.

...

"Erge, why do we still need to come here?"

Outside the mountain, Zhou Wenxin and Zhou Erge were slowly making their way together into the valley. Zhou Wenxin looked both reluctant and faintly scared.

"There is finally someone who is able to control my younger sister..."

Zhou Erge smiled and put on a front. "You previously denounced

him without distinguishing the facts, it is only right that you apologize..."

The Zhou family was rich and influential, how would something as important as herbs not go through various testing before reach Old Zhou's mouth?

Even Lin Yuanwai was no exception.

After both parties ensured that there was no problem, Old Zhou refused to take the medicine, as if to make things difficult for others.

"Then why are we still looking for him... he is obviously someone who does not know martial arts..."

Zhou Wenxin was about to finish her sentence when the image of Fang Yuan appeared in her mind, scaring her and causing her limbs to tremble, making her unable to speak.

"He might not know martial arts but he may be skilled in other areas... In this world, there are not just martial artists. It is rumoured that there are those who practised magic and necromancy where even those martial artists who are able to overcome the 8 gates need to respect..."

Zhou Erge looked solemn. "I have looked at Ri Jiading's wound. It is curious indeed. According to your description, you are only able to see a blinding white flash despite being sharp-eyed. This is the work of the spiritual knights ..."

Thinking of the miracle that Fang Yuan pulled off that day, Zhou Wenxin was unable to speak.

"Remember not to throw a tantrum today, understand?"

Zhou Erge tone turned strict: "This is for our father's sake!"

No herbs and stones were effective in Old Zhou's current condition. It was possible that only the spiritual masters of the legends were able to bring him back.

"I.... I understand!"

While Zhou Wenxin was pampered since young, she understood her priorities, lowered her head and spoke with a soft voice.

Ever since the previous time when Fang Yuan taught her a lesson, a shadow was casted in Zhou Wenxin's heart. Even without the advice of Zhou Erge, she would definitely not go looking for trouble.

Not long after, the valley came into sight.

Zhou Erge circled the valley one time before exclaiming: "Zhou family's Zhou Wenwu, Zhou Wenxin would like to meet Young Master Fang!"

His crisp voice echoed through the valley far and wide.

"Hmmm? "

Within the valley, Fang Yuan, who was honing his skills lifted his head: "Zhou Family's 2nd young master, this voice... It is hard to imagine that he is also one who practice martial arts, and at a higher level too. I am not sure which gate he has attained..."

Fang Yuan currently still had 1 gate to overcome. However, he had sufficient energy to do so.

Fang Yuan was unafraid. If attacked, he had the Flower Fox Ferret which was capable enough to fend off a highly trained martial artist. If he was unable to win the battle, given the valley's location and secret tunnels, he would be able to make a swift escape.

Upon reaching the opening of the valley and spotting Zhou Wenwu and Zhou Wenxin, Fang Yuan grimaced: "If it isn't the two of you. Is this still about the previous incident?"

"Master Fang, please do not misunderstand. My little sister was impetuous and clashed with you!"

Zhou Wenwu was very sincere and turned his head. "Sister!"

"I...I understand."

Zhou Wenxin slowly moved in front and looked at Fang Yuan in the eyes, her limbs started trembling unconsciously.

Under Zhou Wenwu's glare, she stammered: "Master Fang, regarding the previous incident, I sincerely apologize and hope that you are magnanimous....."

Chapter 16: Breaking Through Gates

'There's more trouble!'

Seeing how helpless Zhou Wenxin was, Fang Yuan was speechless.

They must have a purpose other than apologising since they were so polite.

"Young Master!"

Indeed, Zhou Wenwu continued, "My father is sick, and I would like to trouble Young Master to take a trip and visit him. The entire Zhou Family will be so grateful!"

Old Zhou was already at his dying breath, and Zhou Wenwu felt desperate.

"Hmm, this is weird."

Fang Yuan felt suspicious, "Seeing how the Zhou Family and the Spirit Returning Sect are on good terms, did the Sect not render any assistance?"

"How is this possible?"

Zhou Wenwu replied, "The Sect's physicians have visited him, but were unable to find out the cause of the sickness. Based on what they said, if his sickness was so simple, then it wouldn't have evolved to this stage... If the Sect Master did not go travelling with his new disciple..... Sigh..... Such is life..."

"Now I understand!"

Fang Yuan scoffed. "Even the Sect's physicians couldn't tell what's wrong with him, how would I be able to?"

He glanced at the Zhou Siblings, "My apologies, I cannot help your father. The valley is cold, you two should take your leave!"

Without waiting for their reply, Fang Yuan walked back in,

leaving the Zhou Siblings at the entrance.

"Brother... He..."

Zhou Wenxin waited for Fang Yuan's silhouette to disappear before acting up, "He's too..... full of himself, right?"

"Hmm, he's giving me some really weird vibes..."

Zhou Wenwu looked into the valley, eager to fight, but managed to control himself, "This valley feels dangerous... it seems perilous..."

"Is he really a spiritual knight?"

Zhou Wenxin shuddered in fear.

"No! They're different!"

Zhou Wenwu shook his head, and his face was full of sorrow.

Although the Zhou Family had a low position within the Spirit Returning Sect, it was still considered one of the best families within its vicinity.

Everybody would panic when Old Zhou pass away. At that point, even the Lin Family, with only one disciple in the Sect, would be above the Zhou Family.

"Zhou Family... Is this the end for our family?"

The mountain breeze blew, and Zhou Wenwu shuddered.

...

"Eh? We can't leave?"

Not long later, The Flower Fox Ferret came to report the news to Fang Yuan, who was busy practising his Black Sand Palm.

This spiritual beast became more and more human-like. It was able to convey simple messages to Fang Yuan, with the help of body language.

Fang Yuan estimated that its IQ was of a 10-year-old child.

"The Zhou Family is in a mess. If Old Lin wants to go ahead, so be it..."

Fang Yuan stopped thinking and started to dig in.

Since practising martial arts, his appetite grew. Luckily for him, there were plentiful amounts of food within the secluded valley.

The Pearl Jade Crystal Rice was a superior food and was able to sustain his enormous diet.

The sky darkened and the moon rose within the stars.

Within the valley came a continuous echoing of palm-striking.

Fang Yuan was sweating profusely but he was unaware, as he focused on his Black Sand Palm training.

He had only one thought, that he would master this skill today!

"In order to learn martial arts, one must break through the first gate. Only by breaking through this gate will I be a true martial artist!"

The feeling of the Pearl Jade Crystal Rice lingered in his mouth, as he felt a burst of energy within him. His limbs felt energetic.

"Breathe in... Breathe out..."

"Breathe in... Breathe out..."

Accompanied by his deep breathing was a flow of energy in his body, as though it was about to break through a gate.

"Black Sand Palm!"

He shouted, and struck his right palm out.

Peng!

The sandbag broke, and its fillings poured out.

Fang Yuan could feel that a long-awaited gate within him finally broke through!

Kacha!

A loud sound broke the silence, and large amounts of energy flowed within him, making him feel renewed.

"That's the first Golden Gate, I've succeeded!"

Fang Yuan clenched his fists, looked up and let out a cry.

The first three gates of the Golden Gates were Initial, Rest and Life. These three were the first level of cultivation within the world of martial arts. Failure to break through these gates would not hurt one.

In truth, even a normal person practising a martial arts manual over a long time would be able to successfully break through three gates.

But to Fang Yuan, it was a matter of days for him to break through his first gate. He had the potential.

Not just potential, but a good foundation developed in 18 years!

After all, the Pearl Jade Crystal Rice and other rare fruits did help in developing his foundation.

"Is this... how a martial artist feels?"

Fang Yuan stood on the ground and stared intensely at his hands.

He felt that all of his abilities improved after breaking through the first gate, as though he removed a restrictive barrier.

"To know in general, I will still have to refer to the stats board!"

Fang Yuan looked around, and the stats board appeared: "Name: Fang Yuan

Essence: 1.1

Spirit: 1.1

Magic: 1.5

Age: 18

Cultivation: [Martial Artist (1st Gate)]

Techniques: [Black Sand Palm (Grade 1)]

Skills: [Medicine (Level 1)], [Botany (Level 3)]"

When he focused on his Techniques, the relevant information on Black Sand Palm flashed, "[Black Sand Palm (Grade 1)] - External technique, if mastered, one's palm would be as strong as steel, and would be able to break metal. There are a total of 5 Grades. This technique might encompass a poisonous effect. Currently at Grade 1!"

"Even Magic has increased by 0.1?"

Fang Yuan sighed, "No... the effect on Magic must be due to the Questioning Heart Tea..."

He cleared his thoughts. The stats represented his physical fitness, which meant it would be increasingly hard to improve.

An increment of 0.1 had a different meaning between the different stats.

"By breaking through the gates and becoming a martial artist, would it result in an improvement in one's physical fitness?"

After realisation, Fang Yuan felt satisfied.

"Most importantly is that the Black Sand Palm is now an actual technique!"

As long as the technique was recognised by the stats board, it meant that it could be further improved with intense training, in a more systematic way. It was a good deal.

On the flipside, Fang Yuan was still a long way from being able to break through the first gate in every type of martial art technique, seeing how much effort was required just to break through the first gate.

"Unfortunately... .. I am unable to see my experience with the technique, otherwise, that would have been perfect..."

Fang Yuan let out a sigh.

Hidden at the back, Fang Yuan spotted an empty progress bar behind [Black Sand Palm].

The progress bar seemed blurry and required one's focus for it to appear. Once the focus was lost the progress bar would disappear.

"Is this... An original feature? Or is it that this stats board would monitor my progress and add more features as I improve?"

Fang Yuan knew that this progress bar would show his experience.

As for now, since the [Black Sand Palm] had just been registered, the progress bar would appear to be 0%. He focused on his [Medical] and [Botany] and unknowingly realised that his [Medical] had about 70% and should not be far from attaining the next level. As for [Botany], the progress was more than half. It seemed that using the spiritual fertilizer did help him improve his [Botany].

"With this experience bar, it would be much easier to track my progress in the future!"

On the route to becoming a martial artist, Fang Yuan felt full of energy, and without hesitation, started a new session of training.

"Black Sand Palm!"

After another session of training, Fang Yuan took a wooden board to test out his strength.

His palm struck the wooden board, but only a faint outline of his palm appeared. It seemed that his technique still had room for improvement.

"Stats board!"

In the progress bar, there was an improvement. Based on statistics, it seemed like there was almost no improvement.

"Does this mean that one can foolishly practise up to a million times and still break through the gates and attain the next grade?"

Fang Yuan could not hold his excitement in.

He knew that this was probably due to the fact that Black Sand Palm was a normal and widely circulated martial arts technique.

There must be certain criteria being met before one could really attain the next grade.

Taking [Botany] for example, he needed the help of the spiritual fertilizer before attaining the next level.

But compared to those who trained for years and were still stuck status quo, this was a huge improvement for Fang Yuan.

"Stats and the progress bar are physical quantities, and with hard work, there must be some sort of improvement!"

Fang Yuan sighed, "But who am I? Who am I to deserve good potential and luck?"

With hard work come rewards!

Many people could only wish for such progress.

Additionally, he could access his own stats window and his dream experience.

"I will unravel this mystery one day!"

Fang Yuan stared into the mountains, determined.

Even if he had the potential, he knew he needed to work hard and train hard.

Even if he could enjoy the riches of the world, he knew he had to worry and be even more cautious.

He wanted to improve himself, unlock his own potential and understand what was really happening to him.

"The journey ahead is arduous, but I will walk on!"

He let out a long sigh as Flower Fox Ferret witnessed everything that happened. It seemed to understand what was happening.

Chapter 17: Spying

"Black Sand Palm!"

In the secluded valley, a man swiftly stretched out his right palm and left a very clear palm print on a target board.

"My power has improved again? Not bad!"

Fang Yuan kept his palm and felt excited that his experience bar was more than half filled.

He became more familiar as he trained. He was completely fascinated with the feeling of himself getting stronger after every training.

"If the stats for martial arts isn't as hard to improve as the one for botany, I would have attained [Black Sand Palm (Level 5)] easily!"

"Of course, nutrition is also a priority...."

It was noon. Fang Yuan had Pearl Jade Crystal Rice for lunch and sighed while eating.

If it was other normal families, they wouldn't have an abundant supply of Pearl Jade Crystal Rice like him.

Also, how could one endure the repeated tough training for the Black Sand Palm? Unless one was talented enough to enter a Sect and be cultivated, it would be almost impossible for one to become a powerful martial artist.

"Besides..... practising martial arts is also beneficial for the body...."

The physical body of a martial artist would be as strong as a rock. As one's foundation of his techniques got stronger, he would be able to achieve greater things in future.

Fang Yuan suspected that the reason why he was able to master Black Sand Palm so quickly was not because of his increase in magical energy.

"Soon, Master Wenxin's tea tree will have fully grown tea leaves and Vermillion Jade Rice can be harvested... Even though Wu Zong needs this Spiritual Rice, there should be enough left!"

Fang Yuan felt hopeful.

His martial arts improved a lot faster with the presence of the spiritual plants.

The reason why Fang Yuan was in a rush to master his techniques was to be able to protect himself from any danger in future.

"The comprador from Spirit Returning Sect, Song Zhigao?!"

If it was Lin Benchu or the Zhou siblings, it would mean no harm. However, this comprador from Spirit Returning Sect showed hostility, causing Fang Yuan to be more cautious.

Although he looked like he did not have any hard feelings against anyone, he did not seem like a fool. He wouldn't allow someone to be spying on him easily.

"An amount of effort is still needed to complete a tasking once and for all!"

His future and skills in martial arts depended on this spiritual plant.

.....

It was night time.

A few shadows appeared at the outskirts of the secluded valley.

"Comprador Song said that this is the place?"

A man in black observed his surroundings and then cursed softly, "The environment here is so harsh. Only the savage can live in such conditions!"

"This is the place definitely. It shouldn't be wrong!"

A huntsman carrying a giant steel fork was beside him and said,

"I have been here before to trade with Master Wenxin's disciple for animal skin and herbs...."

He sighed in between his words.

"Why? Is reminiscing the past making you hesitate to do it?"

The leader, who was the man in black, laughed.

"How can that be? Ten golden leaves are equivalent to the lives of ten villagers. Dealing with this teenager is a piece of cake"

The huntsman laughed and gave an evil look. "In my opinion, why even bother spying on him. We should just charge in and kill him straight away. We will then leave the body in the forest and let it rot till only left the bones!"

"I agree with that but Comprador Song will not be happy about it. We are instructed to let him be ruined and condemned by the public. Then that is when we can take action!"

The man in black said in a deep voice, "Who let that poor kid be in the way of Comprador Song's magnate?!"

"Magnate?!"

The people around consist of a few villagers and huntsmen living nearby and pirates. Seeing that the leader was hiding something fiercely, no one dared to question further.

"This is it. Our mission today is just to investigate the situation in the secluded valley and also to find out if the boy has any hidden agenda!"

The leader said, "Most importantly, of course, is to not leave any of our traces behind!"

"Understood!"

A few of them laughed ferociously and gathered in the secluded valley.

The surroundings were pitch dark. Even though there was light

coming from the moon, the visibility was too low. Still, these people did not dare to reveal their positions to prevent any attacks.

The resistance in the secluded valley was not that strong and plus, they were dealing with just one guy. Hence, these people were more relaxed.

"Hmm....This is the secluded valley? This place is actually pretty good to live in....."

"There is a flower garden and a spring. This looks normal. Let's go take a look at the back....."

The group of them split up and found the farm at the back of the valley.

"Looks like there is something behind the shrubs!"

The ones who spotted something were experienced hunters and thieves.

"Oh?"

The leader then came forward and found a small pathway behind the shrubs. He was overjoyed when he found the pathway and said, "Let's go take look quickly! Be careful. This guy is full of tricks, even the bodyguards from the Zhou family who came the other time were all defeated by him...."

He spoke halfway and heard a loud biting sound suddenly.

"What happen?"

A few looked at the ground immediately and spotted a black beast. The black beast then went on to bite the leader's leg.

"A trap!"

"Damn it!"

The whole situation became chaotic.

Previously these people sneaked in quietly. Now wouldn't they be discovered if they started screaming in the middle of the night

when their screams could be heard clearly in this secluded valley?

"This is unacceptable...."

A few of them looked at each other, their eyes filled with anger.

Even though the mission objective was just to investigate, they would have to take action since they were under attack.

They did not believe the rumours.

How could a teenager be able to deal with the whole group of them?

This teenager was cunning as he knew where to place the traps. The group had to be even more careful.

"Hiss!"

"Hiss!"

However, they did not expect the white ferret to appear instead of the teenager!

It was the guardian of the valley, the white Flower Fox Ferret, which pounced on them so quickly like a lightning strike.

At that moment, the Flower Fox Ferret's fur stood up and gave a hostile behaviour.

After all, whatever that was on the farm was the Flower Fox Ferret's lifeblood. How could the farm be spied on by others?

"What is that?"

"A ferret?"

"It is so big!"

The huntsman warned, "Careful everyone. This mutated ferret could belong to the teenager...."

"Heh... it's nothing much. It is just a beast and is not any different from a wild dog."

One of them who was laughing changed his complexion

suddenly.

A bright light flashed by in front of him.

"What happened, Dacheng?"

Seeing that Dacheng was motionless, one of them pushed him slightly and Dacheng's body was split in half.

No one knew when he was cut in half by the Flower Fox Ferret!

"Ghost....there is a ghost!"

This bloody scene scared the hell out of everyone.

"This ferret is definitely not a normal one. It is a Spiritual Beast and a weird one!"

The huntsman's scalp became numb. He suddenly recalled the legend of Spiritual Beasts.

Judging from what happened, the ferret was able to understand what human said! Plus, with such body shape and skills, this ferret is definitely a Spiritual Beast.

"Leave now!"

A few of them looked at each other and then hurried away, leaving their leader behind.

They had no choice as their employer, Song Zhigao, was just a mere comprador. How much power could he hold? The leader, who was the man in black was the only one under Song Zhigao that was out here. The rest were all hired.

Such team was able to complete a tasking only when there were no troubles surfacing.

"Keke!"

The Flower Fox Ferret purposely slowed down and chased after the huntsman, as if it found a toy to play with.

"Damn it!"

The huntsman looked at the Flower Fox Ferret and tried to hit it with his giant steel fork.

The huntsman missed and felt a sharp pain in his right hand. A row of sharp teeth appeared in front of his eyes.

At that moment, blood splashed everywhere....

.....

"This noise is killing me. It's midnight. Can't they just let me have a good sleep?"

Fang Yuan couldn't sleep through the series of screams.

He grabbed his coat and yawned while exiting the house. "Thieves? It must have been difficult for them to come to such desolated place to steal from me...."

Even though he said that, his biggest asset was still his farm and he was worried about it. He then quickened his footsteps and went to the back of the valley.

"This....."

It was truly shocking to see a scene with blood everywhere. Fang Yuan was dumbfounded and also furious at the same time. "What have you done, Flower Fox Ferret?! When will I be able to finish cleaning up this mess you made?"

"Keke!"

Flower Fox Ferret's claws were stained with blood. It was going round and round around the leader and showed an innocent look.

"Don't act innocent in front of me. You will have to help to clean up this mess tomorrow!"

Fang Yuan went around a few corpses and reached for the leader who was still panting.

This unlucky guy got his leg broken but his life spared by the Flower Fox Ferret. He was somewhat lucky.

"Don't....don't eat me!"

Of course, this guy was completely scared. He started tearing when he saw Fang Yuan approaching as if he had met a saviour. "Please spare me, sir! I was instructed by Song Zhigao. I will reveal everything!"

How pitiful!

To be bitten by a beast and die without burial, such way to die was too mentally demanding for one.

Chapter 18: The Plot

Dawn.

The sun inched above the horizon, illuminating the morning fog. The Valley slowly came alive, and the vegetation thrived.

"Song Zhigao, comprador of the Spirit Returning Sect."

"Song Yujie, the Sect Elder's beloved son."

"Song Zhong, Elder of the Spirit Returning Sect."

Fang Yuan was sweeping the floor casually, removing traces of the previous night's happenings. He was deep in thought.

The man in black from last night almost suffered a mental breakdown after being intimidated by the Flower Fox Ferret. Fang Yuan did not even have to interrogate him before he gave away everything.

According to him, Young Master Song Yujie was gifted in both the classics and martial arts and was in every sense a suave and accomplished young man. The most important thing to note was that Song Yujie had developed a serious obsession with Fang Yuan's ex-fiancee Lin Leiyue ever since he laid eyes on her.

Elder Song Zhong observed these developments with interest. After all, Lin Leiyue was the Sect Leader's right-hand disciple and had a bright future ahead of her.

It was too bad that Lin Leiyue did not reciprocate Song Yujie's feelings and rejected him outright.

Song Yujie was enraged but naturally did not dare to pursue the matter further with Lin Leiyue, the Sect Leader's favourite pupil. However, he had no reservations about taking out his anger on Fang Yuan.

"Perhaps he thinks that Lin Leiyue and I are lovers? And because of this, Song Yujie's henchman Song Zhigao, with the help of Old

Tian, tried to get rid of me. A shame that I did not budge, hence the follow-up..."

From the information that he gathered, Fang Yuan made a few guesses and had arrived at a reasonable conclusion. This rendered him quite speechless.

"I have nothing to do with Lin Leiyue. Ahh, I'm just an innocent bystander, the most innocent party there is..."

The weak often become prey in this world. Song Yujie had not even designed to make things hard for Fang Yuan and his men were already raring to take action.

"Oh man, I feel like the coming times will be tough..."

Fang Yuan threw his broom away and turned towards the sun. He closed his eyes and stretched.

According to the man in black, there were so many people in Spirit Returning Sect who admired Lin Leiyue that they could form a clique of significant influence. After all, she was the apple of the Leader's eye, one of the future leaders of the Wu Zong!

Even if Song Yujie didn't look him up, a Zhao Yujie or Zhang Yujie would turn up eventually.

At that moment, Fang Yuan felt extremely helpless.

Heaven have mercy on him! Fang Yuan was not interested in inviting trouble, but if people were hell-bent on making life difficult for him, hiding in a corner was not an option.

"Song Zhigao must die!"

Fang Yuan steeled his resolve.

Fang Yuan could bear with anything as long as his interests were not threatened. Events such as the cancelled engagement and the row with the Zhou Siblings, he could tolerate.

However, Song Zhigao had malevolent intentions and conspired to pry open the secrets of the Valley.

To Fang Yuan, other than his own stats, the Spiritual plants of the Valley were things that he would protect with his life.

If his bottom line was breached, he would respond with fire and blood!

"Song Zhigao must be eliminated, but I cannot put myself at risk either...I have to think of a foolproof plan...Of course, the key is still to level up my skills!"

The man in black from last night was Song Zhigao's confidant and knew him very well indeed.

The comprador of the Spirit Returning Sect was undoubtedly intelligent, but he was not well-versed in martial arts. His cultivation level was only around the Third Gate.

He definitely stood no chance against the Flower Fox Ferret.

But the man backing him, Elder Song Zhong, was a different story. That man had broken through the 3 Prosperous Gates, 2 Peaceful Gates, to the level of the 3 Perilous Gates. He was an extremely skilled pugilist and was a known figure in Qinghe County. Song Yujie had every sign of surpassing his master in the near future.

There were the metaphorical 12 Golden Gates in martial arts. One could cruise through the Initial Gate, the Rest Gate and the Life Gate, and unlocking them would lead to a definite increase in powers. Thus they were known as the 3 Prosperous Gates. The following Restriction Gate and View Gate were not too difficult to break through either. They were the 2 Peaceful Gates. It was the Pain, Shock and Death Gates that one had to take caution with. Failure to navigate through these three gates would lead to serious injury and even death. Hence, they were known as the 3 Perilous Gates.

The martial arts were indeed challenging, with so many obstacles to overcome.

Not to mention that after the Death Gate, there were the 4 Heavenly Gates and the Wu Zong Level. It was truly depressing to see that it was such a long and arduous way up.

"Fortunately, the only person we need to deal with right now is Song Zhigao. This should be a piece of cake."

So what if the martial arts were challenging?

With his stats and practice, Fang Yuan had not encountered any impossible problem before.

"Just as well!"

Fang Yuan glanced at his progress bar and saw that he had almost mastered the first level of the Black Sand Palm technique. All he needed was some more proficiency points, equivalent to tens of practice sessions.

"Today, I shall unlock the second gate!"

Fang Yuan had made up his mind.

Fang Yuan could potentially break through the various stages at a phenomenal speed, a speed that could even attract a Wu Zong attention.

After all, every stage of the 12 Golden Gates required meticulous study and intense effort, even the 3 Prosperous Gates.

Fang Yuan, however, only needed to increase his Proficiency points and all would be fine.

Sunrise was the best time of the day to train.

"Huff"

Fang Yuan achieved a state of Zen and displayed the different styles of the Black Sand Palm technique with familiarity. He further conditioned his hands with ointments and potions.

After some time, the Black Palm Sand technique's progress bar in the stats window was finally filled up.

"Kachak!"

Fang Yuan let out a roar as he suddenly felt barriers breaking down within his body. He felt as though streams of energy were exploding from every one of his pores.

As Fang Yuan's Proficiency points reached the maximum, the skill level of the Black Sand Palm technique increased by one.

Black Sand Palm Level 2!

In only a few days, Fang Yuan had accomplished a commendable feat.

"Not only that, but I have broken through the Rest Gate!"

Fang Yuan took a look at his stats window and noticed that there were some changes.

"Name: Fang Yuan

Essence: 1.3

Spirit: 1.3

Magic: 1.5

Age: 18

Cultivation: [Martial Artist (2nd Gate)]

Technique: [Black Sand Palm (Grade 2)]

Skills: [Medicine (Level 1)], [Botany (Level 3)]"

"Having trained the Black Sand Palm technique to Grade 2, its power has been greatly boosted. Whenever I prepare to channel the technique, my palms change!"

Every time Fang Yuan intended to use the skill, both his palms would darken in colour, signifying a tremendous increase in pain tolerance.

"Of course, the most important thing was to have broken through the Rest Gate! My Essence and Spirit points have increased by 0.2?"

Fang Yuan was shocked to see that his Magic Points remained at 1.5.

"Was it because the previous upgrade was due to the Questioning Heart Tea, and a normal breakthrough in martial arts only increases Essence and Spirit points? Or is it because my Magic points are too high and thus, a small increase wouldn't be obvious?

Too bad his current experience in martial arts was not enough to help him decipher this problem.

Nevertheless, Fang Yuan was satisfied to know that his Black Sand Palm technique could level up quickly through proficiency points and that the sky was the limit when it came to improving.

"Song Zhigao..."

Fang Yuan clenched his fists and felt a surge of energy.

...

"Wang San hasn't returned yet?"

Currently, Song Zhigao was suffering from sleepless nights.

As the Spirit Returning Sect's comprador, he had a genial look on his face at all times, while his little eyes carried a hint of slyness. Every matter that he was put in charge off, he settled it reliably and appropriately.

Until he tried to deal with that poor rascal from the mountains in a bid to gain favour with Elder Song Zhong and Song Yujie. Everything changed since then.

"Damn it!"

The more he thought about it, the more he felt like throwing his beloved rain flower porcelain teacup onto the floor.

That darn kid had no idea of what was good for him.

When he ordered Old Tian to cut off the supply of necessities to Fang Yuan and to give him a warning, Fang Yuan should have

heeded it and fled. Why was he still hanging on?

It was the late afternoon now, nearly dusk, and Wang San had not returned yet. Song Zhigao couldn't sit still and paced up and down his hall.

"That kid might be a mysterious character, but Wang San has always been careful, and had only gone on a scouting trip this time. Surely nothing could've gone wrong?"

Song Zhigao clasped his hands together and waited till nighttime. At this point, he felt a chill in his heart, as well as a tinge of regret.

If only he had known better, he would not have messed with the kid.

A shame that there was an enmity between them now. He had no choice but to take action.

Only when the matter was settled, he could answer to his masters. But what if everything screwed up?

Song Zhigao only had to think about Elder Song Zhong's methods before he became numb in the skull. He suddenly lifted his head and whispered to himself as he faced the city.

"It has come to this. There is no other way."

"Men!"

He bellowed.

"Yes, Master?"

A manservant shuffled into the room and bowed.

Song Zhigao might be a comprador, but he was influential enough to have a group of servants at his beck and call.

"Find Old Tian from the medical hall and tell him that if he still wants to make a living in Qinghe County, get his ass over here!"

Song Zhigao had a fearsome look on his face.

"Roger!"

The manservant was flummoxed, but he went about his business dutifully. In no time, he had Old Tian following him back into the hall. Old Tian greeted him with a sheepish smile.

"I hope you have been well, Master Song!"

"Old Tian! The herbs and spices in your medical hall are of rather good quality. The Sect has decided to purchase a larger quantity next year!"

Song Zhigao mentioned the news casually as he sent the manservant away.

"Ah? Thank you so much, Master!"

Old Tian bowed multiple with his hands clasped, delighted beyond belief.

"Of course...this is not without a price though. I need you to do something for me!"

Song Zhigao glared at Old Tian. He was confident that Old Tian would give in. The Sect was the medical hall's biggest client. Old Tian could not afford to refuse him.

"Old Tian is at your service, Master. Old Tian will do anything for you even if it means going to Hell and back!"

Old Tian was a worldly man and continued with his public display of loyalty even though he secretly dreaded what was to come.

"Easy! That is..."

Song Zhigao whispered a string of commands into Old Tian's ear. Old Tian immediately turned pale.

"What? This...this..."

"Hehe, I know that Master Wenxin rescued you once. But you owe nothing to Fang Yuan..."

Song Zhigao laughed coldly and issued a threat.

"If you do not obey me, starting from next month, the Sect will no longer take any of your goods. You might as well crawl out onto the streets !"

Chapter 19: Spiritual Rice

Fang Yuan was still unaware that the gears of a great conspiracy had started turning

Quite the opposite, the current Fang Yuan's heart was filled with ecstatic joy.

"This is..."

The moment he entered the paddy field, he was struck by a flash of red.

The entire vermillion jade paddy went through a complete change. All of the grains were large and full, almost to the point of bursting out of their shells, and they gave off a slight spicy fragrance, as though as they were spices, enticing one's appetites.

"The Vermillion Jade Rice is fully grown!"

Fang Yuan instantly burst out in happiness

"Keke!"

"Keke!"

The Flower Fox Ferret was also elated and really wanted to leap forward to help itself to the rice.

Thankfully after this period of training, it finally understood that this spiritual rice was the same as Jade Crystal Rice, and had to first have their shells removed, before being steamed, only then one would be able to taste an unparalleled taste. Otherwise, it would just be wasting a treasure.

Thus, the ferret still maintained its self control, simply staring at Fang Yuan from afar.

"Mhmm, let's harvest it first!"

After that, Fang Yuan returned to his house, retrieved a sickle and other tools, before starting to harvest the rice carefully.

The good thing was that he had already broken through the Rest Gate, hence his stamina was great, surpassing that of an ordinary man, and his magical energy levels were high, thus there was confidence in every motion. With a few swings of the blade, the stalks of Vermillion Jade Rice fell in an organised manner.

From one side, the Flower Fox Ferret saw the scene unfolding before him, licking his claws, but still not daring to go forward to help out.

It was very aware that its future happiness depended on this paddy field. If anything it did scr*wed things up, wouldn't it just cry itself to death?

"Ok we're done, help me move these seedlings back."

Fang Yuan tied up the Vermillion Jade Rice seedlings into bundles, at the same time tossing over the Flower Fox Ferret's share, "Careful!"

After harvesting, the next step would be drying, threshing, deshelling...

When the final step was completed, he gazed upon the shiny red Vermillion Jade Rice, and couldn't help but break into a smile.

The Vermillion Jade Rice in front of him was about the size of a fingernail, sparkled like jade, with a blazing red line that ran through the center, and brought about a spicy fragrance to one's nose.

"This harvest has yielded around 50 pounds, of which we have to keep half for planting..."

On the other side, Fang Yuan piled up the grains with their shells intact in the storeroom. After keeping them properly, he let out a sigh of relief, and looked at the remaining Vermillion Jade Rice, rubbing his hands impatiently, "I'll be the one to taste this spiritual rice..."

From the side, the Flower Fox Ferret had been staring at the

Vermillion Jade Rice until it started drooling, but it still did not dare to make a move. Instead, it turned around to munch on a good portion of the husks, rubbing its belly with a look of satisfaction on its face.

"So obedient!"

This series of actions by the ferret did not escape Fang Yuan, and he couldn't help but comment.

Although rice husks were usually used to feed livestock in villages, they could not compare to the husks of spiritual rice. These husks probably had many more times the nutrition and elemental energy of Crystal Jade Rice.

"But... if you're eating so much now, do you still have the space for the cooked Vermillion Jade Rice later?"

Fang Yuan said while rapping the Flower Fox Ferret's little head.

The white ferret rolled its eyes, bared its claws, and stared with a strong desire in its eyes, as though as it could eat everything regardless of the amount.

"Really...I can't deal with you!"

After a long guffaw, Fang Yuan went to draw some water from the spring, and added a steamer basket, placing 1 pound of Vermillion Jade Rice inside.

"This Vermillion Jade Rice is a spiritual plant, so I'd better take care when cooking it. Let's start by steaming it..."

Stuffing the rice straw underneath the furnace, Fang Yuan looked as blazing red light lit up the entire room, which made it seem like the entire kitchen was on fire. On top of that, the fragrance emanating from the steamer made the both of them salivate profusely.

The rice straws were from a spiritual plant, but now it was being used as fuel for a fire. If this was seen by members of Spirit

Returning Sect, they would lament about how wasteful Fang Yuan was.

However, to Fang Yuan, wasn't using rice straw to cook rice the proper thing to do?

Moreover, combining these two things could possibly draw out some special benefits too.

"Next time I'll use the rice husks to raise a batch of chickens and duck, then I'll have a complete spiritual feast. That would be really living the life!"

In his heart, there was still that little idea.

As the rice straw burnt easily, hence he had to keep adding more continuously. Once the last bundle turned into fire and vanished, a fragrance 10 times stronger than before filled the entire kitchen.

"The Vermillion Jade Rice is ready!"

Fang Yuan opened the steamer basket, which released a large amount of red gas into the air. The water vapour added onto the bright glow from the Vermillion Jade Rice, which had all turned completely red, like a cloud of fire.

Inside the steamer basket, all of the rice had developed nicely, turning into the size of normal crystal rice. After they absorbed more water vapour, each grain appeared fuller than ever, with a slight hint of fire burning within.

"Keke! Keke!"

Leaping up, the Flower Fox Ferret seemed very impatient.

"Haha...How could your share be any less! Here, eat!"

Fang Yuan took out chopsticks and bowls, giving the Flower Fox Ferret a full bowl, and an identical serving for himself too.

With rice fragrance swirling around him, he swallowed a mouthful of saliva before sending the Vermillion Jade Rice into his mouth.

"Woo..."

In that instant, his pupils dilated.

The Vermillion Jade Rice melted upon contact with his mouth, stimulating his taste receptors like a stream of magma with a dense, fragrant spicy tinge.

This sort of spicy feeling, coupled with the rice's original texture, turned into the best meal. There was no need for any dishes to go with it.

When he finally swallowed the rice, this stream flowed straight into his stomach, immediately turning into icy.

Such spicy rice actually turned into an icy stream after reaching the stomach?

This sensation made it seem like he was inside a dream world. It was as though as after getting steamed for a good half a day inside the kitchen, Fang Yuan went to take a refreshing cold water shower. His whole body felt extremely comfortable, and every inch of his skin felt they were renewed.

The Flower Fox Ferret at the side cleaned out its bowl even faster and stared at Fang Yuan anxiously.

"So greedy!"

Looking down at the remaining amount of rice, he felt a little regretful, but even more fear.

He was afraid that he could not stay disciplined enough, and eventually would take out the last tens of pounds of rice to polish off!

As he saw the look of desire in the Flower Fox Ferret's eyes, he knew that this was not impossible.

"But... Since it's the first harvest, there's no problem to eat a little more today."

Fang Yuan mused while stroking his chin. The taste of

Vermillion Jade Rice was simply too good!

Upon hearing this the Flower Fox Ferret jumped up gleefully, almost using its claws to give a round of applause.

.....

"Whew...I'm satisfied..."

An unknown period of time later, Fang Yuan clutched his belly and lay down on the ground, not feeling like moving even a finger.

At his side, there was the similarly full Flower Fox Ferret.

This human and beast did not have any self-restraint, eating over 5 pounds rice. When thinking back about this, Fang Yuan's heart ached.

His original plan was to rely on this harvest to sustain him till the next one, but it seemed like this was no longer a possibility.

"It looks like we still have to exercise some restraint. Otherwise, we'll only be able to eat rice husks and drink porridge, living life counting every grain that we have..."

Fang Yuan was very frustrated.

Who didn't know that even for the Spirit Returning Sect, Vermillion Jade Rice was only consumed by the sect head and his direct disciple? Moreover, it was not something that was eaten daily.

The life that he and the Flower Fox Ferret led would definitely draw many jealous stares if anyone else knew.

"But...The Vermillion Jade Rice seeds that Minister Lin gave me didn't look like this..."

After eating his fill, this afterthought appeared in Fang Yuan's mind. "So this is the effect of Level 3 Botany? I think the spiritual rice of Spirit Returning Sect is probably not as high quality as mine. Moreover, this is still before any mutation has happened..."

"It's time to train!"

When some of the food in his belly had been digested, Fang Yuan stood up, subconsciously turning to look at his stats window. What he saw shocked him, as there were new changes.

"Name: Fang Yuan

Essence: 1.4

Spirit: 1.3

Magic: 1.5

Age: 18

Cultivation: [Martial Artist (2nd Gate)]

Techniques: [Black Sand Palm (Grade 2)]

Skills: [Medicine (Level 1)], [Botany (Level 3)]"

"Essence increased from 1.3 to 1.4?"

It seemed like Essence meant the state of his body. A sum of all of his physical qualities and attributes.

Before this, the only time it rose was when he broke through a gate.

But now, just from a meal of Vermillion Jade Rice, his Essence actually rose by 0.1?

"Even though it should have the greatest effect since this is the first time, but isn't this a little too much?"

Fang Yuan couldn't believe his eyes.

A body's quality was the foundation of everything, and after a single meal of spiritual rice, there were such stunning changes. Then how impressive would those geniuses from families with an unlimited stream of spiritual rice be?

"But... Their spiritual rice might not be as good as mine. Moreover, they do not have these magical fingers!"

With the help of the stats window, Fang Yuan was confident in climbing to the peak of the world, obviously not fearing any geniuses at all.

"Since it is so, one can't travel a thousand miles without accumulating a number of steps over time... So I can't slack for my daily training!"

Very quickly, he immersed himself in Black Sand Palm training.

But today, he felt that something was different.

During the process of training, a stream of warmth spread out from his limbs and bones. It felt like warm water covered his entire body, giving him energy, and a slight numb feeling all over as though as there was an electric shock.

"This is..."

Since he knew something was different, Fang Yuan did a thorough check of his entire body and looking at the stats window, he made a discovery.

"Black Sand Palm's progress bar is filling up really fast. Is this the effect of Vermillion Jade Rice?"

If his progress bar filled up by one part in 10,000 after one round of practicing the palm technique, now it filled up by one part in 1,000!

An increase of 10 times, how scary was that!

"Vermillion Jade Rice's effect should not have anything to do with my progress, so could it be due to my physical state?"

A thought popped into Fang Yuan's mind.

Since Essence was the foundation of everything, now that his base had grown, the difficulty of martial arts training naturally dropped.

At least this was the case for his progress.

"It seems like I must raise my body's quality faster!"

Clenching his fist, Fang Yuan's eyes glittered with excitement.

Vermillion Jade Rice, Questioning Heart Tea, together with the stats window. These were literally helping him cheat at life.

Chapter 20: The Approach

"Whooooo..."

Fang Yuan practised his breathing, while the sun rose.

"With the help of the Vermillion Jade Rice, my improvements are tremendous!"

Lately, he had become addicted to practising his martial arts. After all, the feeling of gaining experience and becoming stronger was an addictive one.

"Maybe.....It would be much easier to master the Eagle Claw Technique and Rough Breathing Technique now!"

He used to be afraid of not being able to handle many skills at once, but now, he had no more considerations.

When one was at the highest level of a certain martial art, he would experience very fast improvements if he chose to practise other martial arts, like the speed of a rocket.

"Maybe I should wait till I have broken the 5th Golden Gate before attempting it..."

Fang Yuan took a look at his stats:

"Name: Fang Yuan

Essence: 1.8

Spirit: 1.6

Magic: 1.5

Age: 18

Cultivation: [Martial Artist (3rd Gate)]

Techniques, [Black Sand Palm (Grade 3)]

Skills, [Medicine (Level 1)], [Botany (Level 3)]"

"The increment to my Essence and Spirit is 0.3 after breaking the

3rd Gate, the rest must be the credit of the Vermillion Jade Rice..."

"But my Magic has not increased since consuming the Questioning Heart Tea, and still remained stagnant after breaking three through 3 gates..."

Fang Yuan placed more importance on Magic as it was the hardest to increase.

After all, having more Magic than the average person already made Fang Yuan feel different.

If he could increase his Magic even further, what would the unimaginable effects be?

Fang Yuan was excited to know.

"The Questioning Heart Tea is about to germinate soon... and the Vermillion Jade Rice too, I have assigned a larger plot of land to sow the rice... The only thing lacking is the spiritual fertilizer!"

The droplet-like fertilizer that the Flower Fox Ferret brought had extraordinary capabilities to boost the growth of spiritual plants.

And now that Fang Yuan was undergoing martial arts training, he would require large amounts of Vermillion Jade Rice, which increased his dependence on the spiritual fertilizer.

"I need the spiritual fertilizer! And lots of it! Otherwise, the Vermillion Jade Rice and the Questioning Heart Tea would be useless..."

The Flower Fox Ferret had already described to Fang Yuan how dangerous it would be to obtain the fertilizer, and it was best not to attempt to obtain it based on his current skills.

"I am already a martial artist who broke through 3 gates and can even know the whereabouts of the Flower Fox Ferret if I focus... It seems that the level of danger is equivalent to in between the 2nd and 3rd Gate!"

No martial artist could escape the 12 Golden Gates.

Fang Yuan had already broken through the 3 Prosperous Gates. If he could break through the Restriction Gate, he would enter a new realm.

Based on the Rough Breathing Technique, if the martial artists within the first 3 gates were considered beginners, then those who managed to break through the Restriction Gate and View Gate would have just realised their potential.

As for those who managed to break through Pain Gate, Shock Gate and Death Gate, the 3 Perilous Gates, they could lift their heads up high and would be the ones worthy to be elders in the Spirit Returning Sect.

Song Zhigao's backer, Song Zhong, was an example of a successful martial artist who cleared the 3 Perilous Gates.

Furthermore, at his age, it seemed impossible to cross the 3 Perilous Gates and enter the 4 Heavenly Realms.

"Keke!"

"Keke!"

The Flower Fox Ferret appeared, nibbled at Fang Yuan's robe, and ran out of the valley.

"Hmm? There's someone!?"

Fang Yuan started to feel annoyed but had no choice but to take a look.

In front of him was a large group of people. Minister Lin stood in front of everybody, and even the Zhou Siblings were there.

There were another 4 strong bodyguards behind, carrying a carriage, with what seemed to be a silhouette within the carriage.

"Virtuous young man!"

Minister Lin stood at the entrance and waved, "Do you really have the confidence?"

"Confidence for?"

Fang Yuan was confused.

"Of course, about saving a life! The Zhou Family took a gamble and brought Old Zhou here!"

Lin Benchu seemed serious, "Days ago you sent Old Tian to pass me a letter, saying that you had a plan to save his life, on the condition that he was brought to the secluded valley... Ahh, you must have forgotten!"

"Letter?"

Fang Yuan's heart sank and was left speechless. He took the letter and read it. The letter was exactly what Minister Lin described, and the main idea was that he had a plan to save Old Zhou's life, but would need him to be physically here.

The funny thing was that the handwriting on the letter was exactly the same as his own.

"Old Tian..."

Fang Yuan knew exactly where the problem was.

As the only person who traded with Fang Yuan, he would have many of Fang Yuan's letters for him to copy.

Furthermore, Minister Lin met Old Tian before, knew of his background and therefore trusted him.

He wasn't even sure of himself, and knew nothing about Old Zhou's condition!

"That sly fox!!"

Fang Yuan felt fear, "What a perfect scheme, I have nothing to defend myself now!"

Old Zhou was at his dying breath and was tricked to travel a long way to the secluded valley. Old Zhou might just pass away within the valley, and he would be blamed for his passing!

Even if he argued that the letter was not written by him, no one would believe.

Seeing how helpless the Zhou Family was, Fang Yuan remained silent.

He thought to himself, if he was the mastermind behind this plan, his final step would be to kill Old Tian to make it perfect!

"It may even be plotted perfectly since Old Zhou was an old enemy of Song Zhong. But Song Zhigao would not have such guts to do this..."

"Why, virtuous young man, don't tell me..."

Minister Lin was wise and seemed to be able to guess, as he became increasingly worried.

It was likely that the Zhou Family were at their wits ends that they decided to listen to Minister Lin, do the unconventional and send Old Zhou into the secluded valley.

In all of this, Minister Lin swore and gave assurance to the Zhou Family that this was the right choice.

If he were to back out now, the consequences would be unimaginable!

"Let me take a look at him first!"

Fang Yuan took another glance at Minister Lin and knew that he could not blame him.

After all, it was true that he did use Old Tian as a messenger a few times before, as it was very hard to communicate with the outside world within the valley.

"This of course!"

Minister Lin felt a little scared and brought Fang Yuan to the carriage.

"Master Fang, he's all yours now!"

Around the carriage, Zhou Wenwu together with Zhou Wenxin and a few members of the Zhou Family greeted him. A few more highly skilled martial artist stood their ground.

Fang Yuan observed and laughed to himself. It made no sense because if he was really that skilful and could save Old Zhou, that was the best. But if he failed.....The number of expectations on him would likely lead to his death.

Was there a need for any more explanation?

Would the Zhou Family members heed any advice now?

"What a big graveyard, the mastermind must be Song Zhigao!"

Now that everything was prepared, he had no choice but to go ahead.

Fang Yuan took a step forward, opened the curtains, and a rotten stench filled the air.

"What the heck! What's the difference between Old Zhou and a dead man?"

Fang Yuan felt a chill down his spine, as he forced himself to see.

In the carriage laid an old man, as though he was in a deep sleep. He had a very weak breath, and it felt like he might go any moment.

Any professional physician would conclude that there was no cure for him.

The injury was at the chest of the old man, and it was no light injury. It seemed to be recovering under bandages.

"Eh? This is weird!"

Fang Yuan observed and unknowingly said.

"Young master, how's my father? Is there any cure?"

Zhou Wenwu frantically asked, and the Zhou Family members were all staring at Fang Yuan.

Fang Yuan set too high an expectation for himself!

His arrogance made the entire family traverse within the forest and valley, many of which had already cursed and sworn at Fang Yuan. If he was a normal person, they would deal with him!

"I already have some idea, but for the details, I'll have to observe further!"

Fang Yuan returned to the valley, and not long after returned with a box of silver needles. He casually took one of Old Zhou's arms and inserted a needle in.

Puff!

After a short while, he removed the silver needle, and it looked unchanged. Fang Yuan focused on the needle tip, took out a torch and heated the silver needle. He sniffed the needle and could smell a refreshing fragrance.

"Old Zhou was not hurt, but poisoned!"

Fang Yuan looked at the weak old man, and thought, "Could it be.....the Drunk Lover Poison that Master mentioned before..."

Master Wenxin was an expert in medicine, with plenty of experience in saving lives. He briefly mentioned to Fang Yuan before on a few medical cases, and the Drunk Lover Poison was one that was etched in his memory.

This poison had no colour and taste, and even no symptoms at the beginning. It would only make the affected person feel skinnier, less focused, and end up with depression, like a heartbreak, making it extremely unusual.

When affected by this type of poison, it would be hard to observe the poison, and only by heating a silver needle would the light fragrance give away the presence of this poison.

Since Fang Yuan felt interested in the Drunk Lover Poison, he took down notes from his Master, and never would he have

guessed that he would personally encounter a person affected by the Drunk Lover Poison.

"How?"

Fang Yuan appeared stressed for a moment, then relaxed, and the Zhou Family did not dare to disturb his thoughts.

"I can heal Old Zhou!"

Fang Yuan nodded to himself.

If he encountered other serious illnesses, then he would not have been qualified enough to help, but this was different.

The next moment, Fang Yuan shouted, "But, I have one condition!"

Chapter 21: Assassination

"The Zhou Family will obey the instructions of the young master!"

Zhou Wen Wu readily promised after hearing the Fang Yuan gave his words.

"My method of treating the illness is more peculiar. When I am treating the illness, no one is to watch it. Furthermore, it will take quite a while and cannot be interrupted. If not, Old Zhou's life would be in danger!"

Fang Yuan said in a serious tone.

"Why is that so... Can no one watch the procedure? Not even me?"

Fang Yuan furrowed his eyebrows.

"No! I have already prepared a room to treat Old Zhou. The rest of you can wait outside!"

Fang Yuan grimaced.

Zhou Wen Wu flushed as he realized that his opponent knew what he had in mind.

They were afraid of the possibility that Fang Yuan would not keep his word and would disappear without a trace.

"All of you will wait outside the room. If you dare destroy the grass and the trees in my valley..."

Fang Yuan's words were laced with menace.

"I would not let off anyone who would destroy your house and foliage!"

Zhou Wen Wu exclaimed while thumping his chest.

"That's good. Now come in!"

Fang Yuan brought everyone to a stone room within the valley.

The stone room was carved out from a large boulder, with not a single window. Even the door was made from a rock around the size of a millstone.

Fang Yuan did not understand the reason when he saw his master building the stone room. Now, he knew that Master Wen Xin made use of the room to cultivate his inner power.

The cultivation of inner power was not as simple as the cultivation of outer power. It was critical that the person was not disturbed by the outer world during the cultivation of inner power.

The room was built in accordance with Master Wen Xin's plan. Only the person inside could open the door once it was sealed. If anyone on the outside wanted to enter, they would have to expend a great amount of energy to open the door.

"Your father will recover within a maximum of 3 days!"

Before the stone door close, Fang Yuan gave his words to the Zhou siblings before looking at Lin Yuan Wai.

"Virtuous nephew, rest assured that the servants will make their way out of the valley. Only the three of us will remain here!"

Lin Yuan Wai gave his words even though he disagreed with Fang Yuan's view.

"Very well!"

With a resounding crash, the stone door sealed shut.

"I am really not sure if you are lucky or unlucky!"

Fang Yuan lit the oil lamp in the dark. He looked at the half-dead Old Zhou, who was carried into the room and grimaced.

The Drunk Lover Poison was extremely potent. Few antidotes would be able to cure it except for one.

Fang Yuan once heard Master Wen Xin lamented that he would be able to save the person affected by Drunk Lover Poison if he had

possessed Yama's Order.

The Poisonous Dragon Grass was extremely rare and difficult to find. However, Fang Yuan happened to have the antidote with him. It was obvious that he possessed more luck than Master Wen Xin.

'Who was the one that administered this poison? At this point in time, I do not have the energy or time to care...'

Fang Yuan took out a pill that was as dark as ink and fed it to Old Zhou.

"Pant pant..."

After taking the pill, Old Zhou, who was previously grasping for air and appearing to be on the brink of death, started to breathe normally and entered a deep sleep.

It would take more than a day to expel the poison from his body.

'Now, all we can do is to wait... Given the power of Yama's Order, it would be sufficient to put him to sleep for 3 full days.'

Fang Yuan exclaimed before making his way to a corner within the stone room. He dug out a layer of ground before finding a rope. He gave the rope a firm tug.

Crack!

A slab of stone was lifted from the ground, revealing an entrance of a tunnel.

"Ah Master, your design sure is handy!"

Fang Yuan muttered and entered the tunnel. Not long after, he exited from the back of the valley.

Master Wen Xin had created many secret tunnels with the intention of using those tunnels to escape. One of those tunnels happened to be in the stone room where he trained!

Master Wen Xin was considered lucky as he managed to live to a

ripe old age before passing away. Now, Fang Yuan was able to benefit from the hard work of Master Wen Xin as he made use of the tunnel to escape.

"Phew phew!"

Fang Yuan looked into the valley and whistled.

Whoosh!

In that instance, a white streak appeared before him. It was the Flower Fox Ferret.

"Listen up, Flower Fox Ferret, go and guard the spiritual tea. If you are discovered, kill the person regardless of who he is..."

The Vermillion Jade Rice had been properly stowed away. Fang Yuan's only concern was his Questioning Heart Tea Tree.

"Remember!"

He gently caressed the Flower Fox Ferret's fur, his face grim: "If you are no match for the enemy, destroy the spiritual plant and save yourself!"

That was the worst case scenario.

The garden was very well-concealed. The Zhou Siblings were concerned with the life of their father and the possibility of a betrayal was very small.

However, it was best to be prepared in any circumstances.

After giving the instructions to the Flower Fox Ferret, Fang Yuan took a deep breath and started running.

He painstakingly arranged all these to create evidence that he was not around in order to commit a murder!

'Song Zhigao!'

Fang Yuan moved so quickly in the tall mountains and old trees that he appeared to be a shadow. He gave off a deadly aura.

Since ancient times, a dog that bites would not bark. Fang Yuan

had never met Song Zhigao. However, he had already formed an impression of him. After all, having an impression was the foundation of his pursuit!

Fang Yuan's benefits were threatened and he has had enough!

However, Song Zhigao was a member of the Spirit Returning Sect. In order to kill him, Fang Yuan must not be cast as a suspect. If not, his position in Qinghe County would be threatened.

As such, while Fang Yuan knew that it was a trap, he decided to play along and use the saving of Old Zhou to create a perfect alibi to prove that he was not present at the scene. By doing so, he would be able to target Song Zhigao without a problem!

...

Qingye City.

Fang Yuan wore a bamboo hat pulled low which left his face in the shade. He was here to kill someone and as such, should not be out in the open and expose his face or leave behind traces of evidence.

'Old Tian is just as vile, using his power to oppress and help out the villain...'

Fang Yuan arrived in front of the medicine hall while pondering over the matter.

Indistinct wailing could be heard from the backyard of the medicine hall. The wailing sent a shiver down Fang Yuan's spine. He was certain that something was wrong.

"What happened here?"

Fang Yuan asked a random passerby which he pulled from the street.

The passerby struggled for a while before realizing that his opponent's grasp was firm like steel. His face turned pale: "The shopkeeper, Old Tian, passed away due to an illness yesterday..."

'That was fast!'

Fang Yuan was speechless after hearing the news. He let go of the passerby who hurriedly scampered away.

If Old Tian was alive, he would have to be punished regardless if he was forced or not to carry out the task.

However, it appeared that Song Zhigao was faster and more vicious.

He had murdered Old Tian after making use of him to remove an incriminating piece of clue.

After all, Old Zhou was a deacon of the Spirit Returning Sect. Old Tian harmed a member of the sect. Once discovered, not even Elder Song would be able to save him.

As such it was necessary for Old Tian to die, the faster the better.

Fang Yuan was silent. In his mind, he saw the shrewd face of Old Tian.

'Old Tian was too smart for his own good. I wonder if he had any regrets before he passed away, whether he had walked away when he was forced to do so...'

Fang Yuan let out a sigh. He turned and walked away into a street without entering the medicine hall.

...

Song Manor.

'By this time, the Zhou Family should have already reached the valley, am I right?'

Song Zhigao smiled. He occasionally took a sip of the clear tea while he pondered.

'Old Tian is dead, now no one would know the deal that I had with him!'

'Even if he did not die, he would be severely punished!'

Song Zhigao looked around his manor, his grin widened unconsciously.

He was extremely proud of his plan which managed to kill two birds with one stone. He was sure that the magnate would be pleased as well!

Once he gained the favour of the magnate, his success would be imminent.

"Spread the word to serve the magnate wholeheartedly. If he is neglected, all of you shall pay dearly!"

Song Zhigao ordered his servant with a strict expression.

"Don't worry, Master!"

The servant, who had been with him for many years, smiled: "We will make sure that everything is taken care of!"

"That is good! That is good!"

Just then, Song Zhigao felt a sudden and intense palpitation. He felt nervous as if a great danger was approaching.

"Strange...why would I suddenly suffer from palpitations?"

He was uneasy and paced around the garden. He thought, 'Could it be because of Old Tian? I have silenced all those involved. For the Zhou family side, given their strong headed temper, would they spare the charlatan if anything were to happen to Old Zhou?'

"Why do I still feel so uneasy?"

As Song Zhigao was muttering to himself, a shadow sprang from the garden and pounced on him like a cheetah.

"Who is that?"

Song Zhigao stumbled backwards and let out a shriek. He used the Five Elements Palm of the Spirit Returning Sect continuously to protect himself fully.

He was a martial artist who had surpassed the 3rd Gate and could

be considered to be proficient in it.

"Assassin?"

Song Zhigao thought to himself, 'If I am able to survive for a short while, I would be safe!'

However, the man in the bamboo hat did not give him time to react. The man's arms reached out, instantly turning black as steel. With a great force, he struck the arms of Song Zhigao!

Chapter 22: Kill

"Black Sand Palm?"

Song Zhigao naturally recognized this widely-known technique.

Honestly speaking, the technique was a stupid one. It needed an extended period of training for the bones to be able to withstand the strength the technique produced. He was being cultivated by the Spirit Returning Sect and this technique was nothing to him.

However, Song Zhigao could not believe how great the power was when the technique was executed by someone else.

When both got into contact with each other, a deafening sound of bones fracturing was heard. Song Zhigao experienced immense pain on both of his arms and screamed. His body flew and his blood splashed everywhere when his body was in mid-air.

"Your....your power....you are a freak!"

He landed on the ground. He screamed as he looked at his broken arms. He looked at Fang Yuan as if Fang Yuan was a beast.

'My power now is nearly twice as much as a normal human being! This is not only record-breaking, this allows my foundations to be far greater than any normal martial artist with the help of the Vermillion Jade Rice!'

Fang Yuan looked at this scene and understood why he was able to perform that well.

When experts duelled, any small differences can affect the result. Song Zhigao was at [Martial Artist (3rd Gate)]. The quality of his body was not as great as Fang Yuan's. Also, it had been a long time since he was in a battle as he was used to being a comprador. Plus, he was a coward. Hence, it was inevitable that he lost.

"Who are you exactly?"

Song Zhigao landed on the ground, rolled his eyes and was in

shock. "Don't kill me. I can give you lots of treasures and even the martial arts manual...."

"You talk too much!"

Deep inside, Fang Yuan knew never to argue too much with an enemy. He went straight up and broke Song Zhigao's skull.

"Bang!"

Song Zhigao's body laid down on the ground.

"Aahh!"

"Murder!"

The duel happened so fast that when the servants started to react, Fang Yuan had already killed Song Zhigao.

"I'm not a murderer!"

With a hat and towel to conceal his identity, he wouldn't have the thought of killing any witnesses, which involved hitting the ones that screamed the loudest till they fainted.

This was one of the ideas that he got from the dream world.

Everyone would want to claim some trophies after defeating the boss.

Only this time, Fang Yuan had a miscalculation.

"You thief! You still dare to be angry after killing someone!"

"Crack!"

The door frame broke into pieces and flew right at Fang Yuan like raindrops!

Among the flying wooden pieces, a person zoomed past. He pointed out his fingers from his right hand and poked at Fang Yuan's eyebrows.

"Whoosh!"

The sword essence gave a whooshing sound as it swept through

the air

"An expert!"

Fang Yuan returned a hit with his palm and duelled with the person in mid-air. He fell backwards and stared at the person.

"You're at the 3rd Gate?"

The person was wearing a jade-green coloured robe, with a golden waistband and a jade hanging by the side. He was young and had a chic outfit. He looked at Fang Yuan with disdain and said, "You have got the guts to kill my comprador from the Spirit Returning Sect, how dare you!"

Fang Yuan looked at the red print on his palm and was stunned for a moment.

From his training of the Black Sand Palm, he had nearly achieved the highest level in terms of his skill. He should be immune to normal fist attacks, but not sword attacks.

However, his palm had an immense pain this time.

"I didn't expect Song Zhigao to have men around, and one who is at the 4th or 5th Gate!"

Fang Yuan had underestimated the power of his opponent and his opponent was definitely a powerful one. It seemed that his opponent was well trained for a long time and had a very strong body quality. Previously, he could defeat the Old Master with random moves but would have lost if he duelled with his current opponent.

"Afraid to say something?"

At that moment, his opponent approached him calmly. "It is okay if you do not want to speak now. I will still take you down and torture you till you speak with the ten different levels of tortures of the Spirit Returning Sect. I'm not really sure which level you can endure Those who kill my men will have to pay the price!"

"Your men?"

Fang Yuan asked in a hoarse voice, "You are Song Yujie?"

"Oh? You recognize me?"

Song Yujie became curious.

"Hoooo....."

Fang Yuan didn't answer his question but let out a long breath.

If he had met other experts, he would have ran away by now.

But what about Song Yujie?

To be honest, Song Zhigao was just a sidekick of Song Yujie. Song Yujie was really the man in charge!

"Well, I am quite lucky today!"

Fang Yuan laid both his palms flat. Previously, his palms were in good condition like a white jade. Now, his palms were bruised.

"You should feel proud for being able to train the Black Sand Palm to such state, but your external power is too weak. How can you even match yourself with my divine power of the Spirit Returning Sect?"

Song Yujie mocked him, lifted up his right fingers and aimed it right at him like a sword. "Have a taste of my Spirit Returning sword skills!"

"Sword essence!"

Fang Yuan's eyes focused on his fingers.

This was a power generated from a high-level inner power and superior sword skills. Song Yujie was definitely talented to be able to achieve this.

At that point, there was no way of falling back. Fang Yuan did not expect himself to be able to escape from this expert at [Martial Artist (4th Gate)] or [Martial Artist (5th Gate)]. He gave a fierce look and suddenly pounced like a crazy man, "Boundless Black

Sand!"

"Bang!"

The power from the palm was easily destroyed by the energy from the sword skills and Song Yujie could only feel a slight force from Fang Yuan.

Song Yujie looked down and saw a small black print on his back of his hand. He then looked at Fang Yuan, who had an extra wound on his chest, and his expression changed. "You dare to hurt me?"

"Not only.....haha.....I will not only hurt you but kill you as well!"

Fang Yuan laughed even though he was coughing out blood.

When duelling with a person that had twice as much as a normal person's body quality, the healing power he brought about was shocking. At least he knew that his external injuries did not look too serious.

"Why are you not admitting that you are in the wrong!"

Song Yujie went forward with his trembling right hand. A spiritual snake-like light appeared and he was able to twist his fingers to become like a twisted sword!

After being hurt a little by Fang Yuan, he decided to get serious.

"Looks like you have not exerted your full power. I am lucky this time....haha...."

Fang Yuan felt very fortunate.

He knew that even though he was benefiting a lot from the spiritual plants, he was still inferior as compared to the real talents from other sects.

If Song Yujie had used his twisted fingers and attacked Fang Yuan just now, he would have been dead since he did not train his sword skills.

"Lucky me...."

Song Yujie frowned.

No matter what, he felt that the mysterious Fang Yuan had no chance in making another comeback.

However, just when he was about to prepare to attack Fang Yuan's limbs and interrogate him, he felt something strange.

"My right hand....is numb...."

He focused on the black print which was on his back of his hand, and said, "You poisoned me?! How brutal!"

"Now we are dealing with life and death. There is no such thing as one being too brutal to another!"

Fang Yuan slowly moved forward and saw Song Yujie's face turning blue-black in colour. Song Yujie quickly took some antidote. "You don't need to do that. I have tested this poison and it is able to poison a martial arts expert at the 3rd Gate to death easily...."

Song Yujie fell onto the ground as soon as Fang Yuan commented. He was horrified to see his palm starting to rot.

He had been poisoned by the mutated Pearl Tail Snake's poison.

After attaining [Black Sand Palm (Grade 3)], poison could be added along with normal attacks. Fang Yuan was naturally impolite and decided to add the Pearl Tail Snake's poison to his Black Sand Palm since he had Yama's backing.

The result was shocking and extraordinary as Song Yujie, who did not take any precautions, was defeated.

"Black Sand Palm....added with poison? Are you a disciple of Kou Feng?"

Song Yujie screamed loudly, "Aahh....you are dead. My father from the Spirit Returning Sect will find you!"

"You are about to die and you still don't want to admit defeat?"

Fang Yuan then moved forward and eased his pain by killing Song Yujie's skull with his palm.

"The addition of poison to Black Sand Palm seems like a special technique. So only the creator Kou Feng and his disciples would know about this technique?"

Song Yujie gave his last message and it surprised Fang Yuan a little.

When he first practised the Black Sand Palm, the message hinted at the possibility of encapsulating poison within the palm, and after much progress, it became a skill of his own.

"Is this the side effect of the system? Whenever I develop my skills to the limit, hidden abilities will always be discovered?"

There was little evidence to prove his hypothesis right now and so he could only guess.

"But right now, I should really start leaving this place!"

He observed his surroundings.

Due to his murder of the two, the Song Manor was now in chaos. There was crying and screaming from the backyard and many of the servants escaped through the main door.

'There is too much movement and this will definitely attract others!'

Fang Yuan abandoned the idea of going to the backyard to steal valuables. Instead, he searched the bodies of Song Zhigao and Song Yujie and found a few things of value. Without taking another look, he escaped by jumping over a wall.

Before leaving, he burnt Song Zhigao's manor and watched it being destroyed in the fire.

This was not only to vent his anger but also to create more chaos. Hence, others would be distracted by the fire and Fang Yuan would then be able to escape.

After all, how could the local authorities disregard the fire and let it spread to other parts of the city?

Black smoke filled the lighted sky.

He grew in the mountains since young and could traverse any forest easily.

"This is so enjoyable!"

He reached a creek after escaping for a period of time. Fang Yuan heartily drank the spring water and burnt his jacket and his hat.

A poem from the dream world appeared in his mind at that moment.

'5,000 soldiers were sent in secretly, under the orders of a commander. They were instructed to engage in close quarter battles, and kill like there was no tomorrow.'

"Unfortunately, even though the killing of the thieves become quite high profile, the process was still enjoyable!"

Chapter 23: Continuation

The spring water gurgled gleefully.

Fang Yuan sat by the stream and cleaned up his wounds. He reflected on the mission, checking if he had left behind any incriminating flaws.

'Killing Song Zhigao was akin to maiming the executive arms of the Song family. Who would've known that Song Yujie was at the scene too? He had to die too!'

Fang Yuan did not regret killing Song Yujie one bit.

In fact, given that he was skilled enough, Fang Yuan had no qualms about eliminating Elder Song Zhong if he was there as well.

The enmity ran deep now. Fang Yuan had to uproot all his potential foes.

'Having terminated Song Zhigao, there isn't anyone left who might trouble me for now...it's just that...'

Creases lined Fang Yuan's forehead.

He was aware that even though killing Song Zhigao was not a big issue, but Song Yujie had died as well. This would definitely incur the wrath of Song Zhong and even the whole Spirit Returning Sect.

Once the sect found out, they would not rest until Fang Yuan was dead.

After doing some careful thinking, Fang Yuan was sure that he had not left behind any loopholes.

After all, he had so many potential alibis in the valley. Besides, no one in the outside world knew how he looked like.

As for the Black Sand Palm technique being recognised as his speciality? Well, there were hundreds of the technique's proponents in Qinghe County.

Moreover, his acquisition of the martial arts manual was a very recent development. Not even Minister Lin himself would believe that Fang Yuan's skills could improve by leaps and bounds in so short a time, such that he could overpower Song Yujie!

'As of now, as long as nothing goes wrong in the Valley, I'll be safe...'

Fang Yuan applied some ointment on his chest before putting his shirt back on. He moved about and was relieved to find out that although his wounds still hurt, they did not affect his range of motion.

'Of course, I haven't seen enough of the world yet. I cannot be complacent...'

Fang Yuan gave himself a silent warning.

In this world, the pugilists were considered to be a special group of people by mortals. However, there were other fabled beings including spiritual knights, magical knights, pill masters, or even gods and monsters. These were tales, but there could be some truth to the stories.

Maybe all he needed was just a few unimaginable scenarios to inspire him so that he could discover the secrets.

"Of course...Song Zhong isn't that influential, although he has a large following in the Spirit Returning Sect. There is time left! I have to level up as soon as possible."

Currently, he was but a novice in the martial arts, all alone in the world. He could be picked on by anyone.

But what if he was the Wu Zong or even an immortal spiritual knight foretold by the legends? If that was the case, Song Zhong wouldn't dare to exact revenge for Song Yujie and Song Zhigao.

In conclusion, everything boiled down to power!

Fang Yuan was not powerful enough at this point in time though,

which made a personal talisman all the more important.

Fang Yuan peeked at the sun, then sped along the mountain roads towards the back end of the Valley.

"Keke!"

A white figure zipped past and simultaneously appeared as the Flower Fox Ferret. The ferret bowed its head to let Fang Yuan rub it, then frantically waved its paws in a bid to communicate with Fang Yuan.

"Oh, they've taken no action at all?"

Fang Yuan heaved a sigh of relief when he understood the ferret's message.

If the Zhou and Lin families decided to make mischief and pry open the secrets of the Valley, or gained forced entry into the Valley and discovered that Fang Yuan was missing, then he would have been on the run with the Flower Fox Ferret by now.

It wasn't like he couldn't grow the spiritual plants elsewhere again. But he only had one life.

Anyway, everything was going according to Fang Yuan's plan.

"Mm, It's been hard on you!"

After he sent the Flower Fox Ferret away, Fang Yuan delved into a secret passageway which led him into a stone chamber.

Old Zhou was a very important person as well. If he did not make it, it would make life very difficult for Fang Yuan.

With a sinking heart, Fang Yuan lit up the oil lamp, which illuminated a body lying on a stone platform. Its face was bluish-black and had toxic boils oozing with pus.

On the first look, it seemed obvious that Old Zhou had died from acute poisoning.

But Fang Yuan heaved a sigh of relief.

"It is done!"

He knew that although Old Zhou looked terrible, he had barely escaped with his life.

If the Drunk Lover Poison had seeped into the bones, no symptoms would surface on the body. Then as time passed, the poison would be fully absorbed and become fatal.

Old Zhou's deformed appearance meant that the poison was being forced out from his body.

"But from the look of this, Old Zhou was heavily poisoned. This amount of poison could only have been administered over a period of time!"

Fang Yuan shook his head after making the observation and gave Old Zhou a dosage of Yama's Order. He then made an incision on Old Zhou's arm and performed acupuncture so as to drain out the infected blood.

After around half an hour, Old Zhou's breathing became less laboured and the boils on his face had been cleared. His complexion regained some pinkness in colour. The worst was over.

"Whew..."

Fang Yuan wiped the sweat from his brow and exhaled.

If he did not need the Zhou family to become his alibi, he would not have spent so much energy at one go on reviving Old Zhou.

Poisonous Dragon Grass was a key ingredient for the versatile antidote, Yama's Order, and it was a rare find. Thus, Fang Yuan's stocks of Yama's Order were already low to begin with. Fang Yuan also needed to keep some of this medicine on standby because of his exposure to a variety of poisons while honing his Black Sand Palm Technique.

"You lucky old man..."

Fang Yuan grumbled under his breath as he pressed a switch

mechanism, which activated a set of stone doors.

"Click, Clack"

The clanking movement of gears pulled the heavy stone doors open and rays of sunlight streamed into Fang Yuan's eyes.

"Young master! How is it going?!"

Outside, the Zhou siblings and Minister Lin were pacing about anxiously.

"It was a success!"

Fang Yuan stepped aside to let Zhou Wenwu enter and carry out Old Zhou, whose recovery was nothing short of a miracle.

"He has already pulled through the most crucial stage. As long as you feed him tonics regularly and allow him to rest well, Old Master Zhou will be able to recuperate fully."

The Drunk Lover Poison worked the same way as bone-gnawing maggots and fed on the tonics that were brewed for Old Zhou.

The Zhou family exhausted many resources in their quest to find rare and coveted herbs for the nourishment of Old Master Zhou. However, they had no idea that this, in fact, hastened his demise.

Fang Yuan also knew that an enemy had infiltrated the Zhou family.

But he did not reveal this to the Zhou family because after all, they were not well acquainted.

"Would young master be compassionate and allow our Old Master to stay on here for a few days?"

Zhou Wenwu was reassured by Old Zhou's condition and gave a deep bow to Fang Yuan.

"Alright, but he will have to stay outside the valley. I like peace and quiet and I do not want to be disturbed."

Fang Yuan rubbed his chin and gave a curt nod of approval.

Since had already done the Zhou family a favour, he might as well help them all the way. If they went back the Zhou manor in this state and were attacked, he would be greatly affected.

"Haha, it seems like our young master's healing skills are nearly on par with Master Wenxin's!"

Minister Lin seemed outwardly excited as he said this, but carried a tinge of regret in his heart.

"Yeah, let's call it a day. I'm tired and I will not be sending you all off!"

Fang Yuan flapped his sleeves, showing every sign of impatience.

Usually, such behaviour would be criticised as arrogance. But Fang Yuan had distinguished himself by reviving a man who was nearly dead and had won the respect of this crowd. They looked upon him with awe and immediately retreated from the valley.

After all, only Fang Yuan could make sure that Old Zhou recovered properly. Also, there was no saying if Fang Yuan's healing skills could come in handy in the future. Hence, they could not afford to offend him.

Fang Yuan was relieved when this bunch of troublesome people left.

With such a big number of alibis, Elder Song Zhong had no reason to suspect Fang Yuan of killing Song Yujie. Even if he previously did, these people would convince him otherwise.

.....

Qingye City.

In front of a pile of ruins.

"Yujie?"

Elder Song Zhong only begot Song Yujie when he was past fifty. All the more he cherished his only son.

When he heard the news, he dropped all matters concerning the Spirit Returning Sect and rode to Qingye City in a hurry. He was stunned when he arrived at Song Zhigao's ruined manor.

"Elder Song, we have brought the workers of the manor before you. All of them are accounted for!"

Sect disciples bowed to him and rounded up a group of frightened-looking servants.

That fateful day, although Fang Yuan had killed the Songs and set fire to the manor, he had not massacred the innocent. Having been spared, many of the servants had looted the manor and planned to flee the city.

However, Song Zhong had managed to recapture all of them, which clearly indicated the extent of his influence.

"Tell me everything that transpired that day! Now!"

Song Zhong maintained his composed demeanour, his eyelids half shut, tone mellow. But those who knew better could see that it was the calm before the storm.

"Master Song, please spare us!"

Some of the maids and manservants had begun to cry in fear.

"A man with a bamboo hat charged in and killed Song Zhigao together with Young Master Song. We had nothing to do with it!"

"Yujie...is dead?!"

Song Zhong murmured under his breath. He could not believe his ears. He waved his hands and let a blast of energy radiate outwards.

"Pfft, Pfft"

The force ripped holes into the servant who was talking, and blood gushed out like waterfalls.

"Since Yujie has passed away, why are you still alive?"

Song Zhong muttered, then called over a disciple named Song San.

"Song San, you have followed me since you were a young age. You know very well my way of doing things. I don't care how you interrogate these servants. I want everything there is to know about the man with the bamboo hat!"

"Yes Master!"

Song San behaved most solemnly, but he was in fact overjoyed.

Song Yujie was Song Zhong's rightful heir and had always taken precedence over the other disciples. Until now. Now that Song Yujie was dead, it was Song San's time to shine.

If he could inherit Song Zhong's mantle and estate, he would finally be able to fly high!

'Whoever the murderer is, wherever you are, I have to thank you...since you've already helped me once, help me out one more time. Let me cut off your head to guarantee my bright future!'

Song San cackled with mirth in his heart and yet was able to keep up his sombre and mournful display. He clenched his fists to bring it up a notch.

"We must take revenge for Yujie!"

"Hmph!"

Song Zhong sent Song San away with a wave of his hand, his eyes gleaming with disdain. Song Zhong had seen enough of the world to know the true intentions of these disciples, but he had to bear with them for now. He still needed to make use of them.

The most pressing issue at hand was to exact revenge for Yujie!

"I taught Yujie myself. He had already broken through the 4th Gate in his martial arts training. He was also well versed in the Spirit Returning Swordsplay and Heart Manual. Hardly anyone in the world of martial arts would have been a match for him. How

could he have died? How?!"

Song Zhong stared forlornly at the ruins.

"Could it have been my nemeses? Did they deliberate draw Yujie into a trap?"

He would never have expected that Song Yujie's death would be a total coincidence. Song Zhong's thoughts were already running further away from the truth, and he began to plot against his old enemies.

Chapter 24: Inner Power

At night, it was quiet in the secluded valley.

The Zhou Family was now extremely obedient to Fang Yuan. Even when Fang Yuan chased them out of the valley, they took it lightly and went on to build grass huts outside of the valley.

Little did they know that Fang Yuan had planned all these to get himself out of trouble.

Wouldn't it be trouble if they found out that Fang Yuan ate Vermillion Jade Rice, and drank Questioning Heart Tea for every meal?

After having his fill, Fang Yuan sat on a bamboo chair and examined his wound.

"Good... You are beginning to heal..."

He had an amazing physical quality to begin with. After a full meal of Vermillion Jade Rice, the healing accelerated.

There was increased blood flow to his wound and it felt less painful.

"A speedy recovery would be best, otherwise others might find out!"

With his current level of [Medicine] together with his herbs, it would have already been a quick recovery, but it was another happy surprise realising the Vermillion Jade Rice's hidden ability.

Thinking about his accomplishments, Fang Yuan smiled to himself.

Although he did not have time to loot the entire mansion, the rewards from Song Yujie and Song Zhigao were enough.

Other than money, Fang Yuan looted a Spirit Returning Heart Manual from Song Yujie!

This was obviously a high-level Spirit Returning Sect manual, which Fang Yuan took as his own. He memorised the entire manual, before destroying it completely.

"Spirit Returning Sect has no morals!"

He recited the Spirit Returning Heart Manual in his mind, his face looking stern.

This was because in the manual, there were lapses in the crucial parts. Obviously, these lapses were meant to be covered and explained by the master in order for the disciple to be able to understand. It was a form of insurance for these higher-level martial arts.

If Song Yujie had any doubts about the Heart Manual, he could look for Song Zhong.

But for himself? Even if he managed to save Old Zhou, could he expect him to betray Spirit Returning Sect and share this big secret with him?

'Hu... It seems that if I don't join them, even if I try hard enough, I won't be able to learn the full thing...'

Fang Yuan shook his head and took a look at his stats:

"Name: Fang Yuan

Essence: 1.8

Spirit: 1.6

Magic:1.5

Age: 18

Cultivation: [Martial Artist (3rd Gate)]

Techniques: [Black Sand Palm (Grade 3)]

Skills: [Medicine (Level 1)], [Botany (Level 3)]"

At this point in time, behind [Medicine], the (Level 1) began jumping, and a short while later became (Level 2), with its

description changing,

"[Medicine (Level 2)] - You are already a skilled doctor and can treat the majority of illnesses. You could achieve a greater effect with the help of normal mountain herbs."

"Normal mountain herbs, this means that spiritual medicine would not have any effect on my progress..."

Fang Yuan shook his head and felt that he was a little too greedy.

Of course, it was a pleasant surprise for him to attain a higher level in [Medicine].

His real joy was being able to fill his experience bar in Black Sand Palm after killing Song Yujie, as though he was able to break through the next gate anytime.

'In the 12 Golden Gates, the first 8 are Initial, Rest, Life, Restriction, View, Pain, Shock and Death... it would be an accomplishment itself being able to break through from the 3 Prosperous Gates to the next 2 Peaceful Gates, and an eye-opener for those who practice the most basic martial arts.'

Fang Yuan looked at this palm, enlightened.

Martial artists who broke through the 3rd Gate were already uncommon, but those who broke through the 4th and 5th Gates were the elites, especially to younger martial artists.

Even Song Yujie himself, who was like Song Zhong in his younger days, could only break through the 4th Gate.

"From the 4th Gate onwards, even if the experience bar is full, something more has to be done to break through the next gate?"

Fang Yuan looked at this fully-filled experience bar, and without hesitation, "Advance my Black Sand Palm to the next grade!"

"Ding!"

A loud sound followed, as he noticed the '3' behind [Black Sand Palm (Grade 3)] jump, and transformed to '4'!

[Black Sand Palm (Grade 4)]!

"Mmm!"

Fang Yuan clenched his teeth and noticed his palm turned pitch-black. Veins were distinct like worms, as though they were crawling up his arm.

A gush of hot air originated from his palms and travelled up his arm, breaking through many barriers before settling down at his chest.

This heat energy was different from anything he felt before, as his abdomen felt stronger and stronger.

"Is this... inner power!?"

Fang Yuan became really excited.

"[Black Sand Palm (Grade 4)], the skill initially strengthened the external parts of my body, but it's now starting to have an effect inside the body?!"

Inner power was the essence of power for martial artists and was a foundation for high-level martial arts techniques. The sword essence that came from Song Yujie was an example of the use of inner power.

Fang Yuan's strength diminished when it encountered the sword essence. If not for the poisonous effect brought about by the Black Sand Palm, Fang Yuan would have died under Song Yujie's hands.

"Sadly, the inner power when cultivated through the Black Sand Palm is rudimentary and cannot compare with the Spirit Returning Sect's Heart Manual... The highest I can go will be the 5th Gate...."

Fang Yuan knew that he was just one step away from attaining the highest standard of Black Sand Palm as harnessed by its creator, Kou Feng.

He looked at the description,

"[Black Sand Palm (Grade 4)] - External martial arts, and if mastered, one's palm would become as strong as steel, and able to break gold and jade. There are a total of 5 grades, and now currently at Grade 4. Comes with stronger poison abilities and strengthened inner power!"

'With more inner power, I can break through more gates!'

Fang Yuan took a deep breath, controlled the energy within his abdomen, and prepared for the breakthrough of the 4th Gate, Restriction Gate.

"Crack!"

A sound was heard, and immediately he felt an even larger amount of energy within his abdomen. The inner power within him flowed freely.

'Breaking through gates is one thing, and crossing realms is another!'

Fang Yuan thought to himself silently.

He was truly a martial artist at the 4th Gate now. If he continued to practise the Rough Breathing Technique, he would be able to train that to Grade 4 too, just that he would be unable to break through another Restriction Gate and reap its benefits one more time.

Furthermore, to break through the 5th Gate, he would have to see which technique of his would break through the 5th Gate first, and it did not depend on the how many techniques he had. Within the martial artists, there was an unspoken rule of how one should not try to master everything.

'A martial artist at the 4th Gate must train their inner power. Without any Heart Manual, the Eagle Claw Skill can only break through the first 3 gates... But if the Heart Manual compliments it, there would be tremendous improvements and even the potential to break through the 3 Perilous Gates!'

Fang Yuan considered to himself seriously.

The potential of the Black Sand Palm was the same as the Rough Breathing Technique and only had the potential to break through the 5th Gate.

If he wished to break through the Pain Gate, he would need to find a higher-tier martial art to practice.

'I would never dare to practise this incomplete Spirit Returning Heart Manual. I wonder, in the end, would the stats window show me that the skill is completed, or would it try and predict the way ahead for the Black Sand Palm...'

Fang Yuan touched his chin, smiled and realised he became greedy.

He dismissed his inner power, and his palms appeared normal again, as though he was a normal young man. No one would be able to associate him with being a murderer.

"Did my stats increase?"

After a while, as the heat energy from his inner power dissipated, Fang Yuan took a look at his stats board and realised the following changes:

"Name: Fang Yuan

Essence: 2.2

Spirit: 2.0

Magic: 1.5

Age: 18

Cultivation: [Martial Artist (4th Gate)]

Techniques: [Black Sand Palm (Grade 3)]

Skills: [Medicine (Level 2)], [Botany (Level 3)]"

'The bigger the danger, the better the chance to improve oneself. The higher the cultivation level, the harder it is to advance,

especially when it comes to the 3 Perilous Gates. If one fails, he might lose control of himself and even lead to death, but the rewards are worth the risk!

Fang Yuan was extremely satisfied at seeing the increment for his Essence and Spirit.

At this moment, the sun rose and the sun rays peered through his window.

"Unknowingly, the night has passed!"

Fang Yuan took a deep breath and stood up, shook his legs a little, but then realised that his legs were never numb to begin with, but rather, full of energy. As for the wound on his chest, it was almost healed and a scab was already forming.

At this rate of healing, a complete recovery would be done in no time and there might not even be any scar.

"This is indeed good news!"

He laughed, walked out of the door and intended to boil some water and brew tea.

When he reached the entrance of the valley, he saw Minister Lin and the Zhou siblings supporting another man, all waiting at the entrance.

"Zhou Tong wishes to thank young master for saving my life!"

Old Zhou did not seem too old and looked quite healthy. When he saw Fang Yuan, he shook off Zhou Wenxin's hand and prepared to pay his respects to Fang Yuan.

"You have only just recovered, you should spend more time resting!"

Fang Yuan casually replied.

"Mmm, I would like to have a word with young master, if you will!"

Zhou Tong turned around, looked at the Zhou siblings with a serious look, and thanked Minister Lin, "I am eternally grateful for Brother Lin's help!"

"Haha, Brother Zhou, you're too courteous!"

Minister Lin was aware and could tell straight away that Old Zhou wanted to have a private talk with Fang Yuan, and said, "I have other things to see to, I'll take my leave first!"

With him, he brought along the Zhou Siblings and left the entrance of the valley.

"Old Zhou, please speak your mind!"

Fang Yuan brewed a pot of tea and sat down quietly.

"This tea..."

Old Zhou lifted his teacup, took a sip and his expression changed, "Not bad!"

Since Old Zhou was an outsider, Fang Yuan did not brew the spiritual tea, but these tea leaves were still grown and hand-picked by him, and with the complement of the Meditative Tea Ceremony, it still managed to surprise Zhou Tong.

'He must be a talented person, to be able to brew tea of such standards. I should get straight to the point...'

After one cup of tea, Old Zhou suddenly exclaimed, "Ah! There is misfortune within the family!"

It seems that he was still unaware of his predicament.

Chapter 25: Gift

"Sir, you must be joking ..."

Fang Yuan shook his head: "There will always be people who are unsatisfied when it comes to dividing benefits in such a big family!"

"The words of the master are indeed wise!"

Zhou Tong was surprised that Fang Yuan was very experienced and could clearly see the ways of the world. He was wise beyond his age.

"I am afraid that this is not the reason you find me for?"

Fang Yuan blew the steam off the teacup. He looked at Zhou Tong and grimaced.

"I would not hide the truth from you!"

Zhou Tong appeared to have nothing to hide: "I am preparing to return to Qingye City today."

"Oh? Why is that so?"

While Fang Yuan did have his suspicion, he did not let on what he thought.

"I received the news this morning that something big happened in Qingye City... Elder Song's beloved son, Song Yujie, as well as a servant, were murdered in the city. That vicious person even set the house on fire!"

"Sss...."

Fang Yuan pretended to be surprised: "Who would be so vicious?"

"I am not sure as well. Elder Song is going crazy with the loss of his only son. The whole city is in a state of unrest..."

Zhou Tong shook his head. Fang Yuan's acting was too good and Zhou Tong did not have any reason to suspect him. Little did Zhou

Tong knew that the vicious murder was just sitting opposite him.

Fang Yuan could tell that Zhou Tong was secretly rejoicing. Zhou Tong and Song Zhong were from different factions in the sect and Zhou Tong was happy over Song Zhong's misfortune.

"If that is the case, I will not disturb you any further!"

Fang Yuan smiled as he lifted up the teacup.

"It's okay!"

Zhou Tong was embarrassed. He had been dismissed but he continued to stay. It was indeed awkward.

He had no choice as he had a favour to ask of Fang Yuan.

Zhou Tong took a look around before he knelt down and kowtowed: "I will always be grateful to you for saving my life. However, I have a favour to ask you and hope that you would not decline"

"Since you are so bold to ask for a favour, there is no need to explain further!"

Fang Yuan took a sip of tea, almost as if to aggravate Zhou Tong and drive him to his grave.

Zhou Tong could see that while Fang Yuan was highly skilled and could work wonders, he was extremely apathetic.

However, Zhou Tong had no choice but to ask for his help.

Song Zhong had become totally crazy after the loss of his son!

Zhou Tong was afraid that if he was alone, he might be hurt or even killed!

Song Zhong and he were of the same sect, they belonged to conflicting factions. While they never had a fallout, he was afraid that Song Zhong would be irrational and hurt him.

Fang Yuan's reaction, while overboard, was within Zhou Tong's expectation. After all, he was not related to Zhou Tong and even

saved his life. There was no reason for him to continue helping Zhou Tong.

Zhou Tong took a deep breath and revealed his trump card: "I heard that you are interested in martial arts? You previously traded Red Mountain Ginseng for 3 martial arts manuals? Would it not be better for me to be here to help you with the manuals?"

"Hmmmmmm?"

Fang Yuan's interest was piqued after hearing that from Zhou Tong. He helped Zhou Tong up with his left hand and said: "We can talk after you stand up!"

"Oh?"

Zhou Tong could not help but felt astonished as he felt a surge of power which caused him to stand in spite of himself.

"This..."

Zhou Tong was a highly-skilled martial artist who had surpassed the level of [Martial Artist (5th Gate)]. He was a deacon of the Spirit Returning Sect. In order to reach that position, he possessed a high level of martial arts skills. His skills were hardly affected despite him being unwell.

In spite of this, Zhou Tong was unable to resist when Fang Yuan single-handedly forced him to stand. It was clear that Fang Yuan was highly skilled as well.

"I am definitely interested in some high-level martial arts that are able to enhance and improve myself!"

Fang Yuan answered without hesitation.

Furthermore, in order to overcome the Pain Gate in the future, he must possess a higher level of martial arts.

"However, I will have to politely decline if you want to give me the manuals of the Spirit returning Sect. Not everyone will dare to cross the Spirit Returning Sect and be hunted by them

incessantly!"

Fang Yuan smiled.

"How is that possible? I will not do something that will hurt others and myself even if I have more courage!"

Zhou Tong drew out a manual: "It was by chance that I come across Iron Skin when I was young and I never came to regret it. This technique can be combined with the Eagle Claw Technique to become the Eagle Claw Iron Skin Technique. Yu Qiuleng is very proficient in the Cold Iron Eagle and is famous within the inner circle..."

"Oh, I see!"

Fang Yuan nodded his head. He remembered the martial artist that accompanied Lin Yuanwai during the withdrawal of the marriage. He now realised that the martial artist surpassed Zhou Tong in every aspect, be it rank or skills.

The Eagle Claw Technique was more well-known than the Black Sand Palm Technique with more divergence of practices.

For example, using the Iron Skin's defence as the focus in the Eagle Claw Iron Skin Technique or using the offensive ability of the skill, could greatly enhance the Eagle Claw Technique and even techniques such as the Fiery Claw, and the Icy Eagle Claw. Even the original creator would be confused with the countless variation of the practices.

'The Eagle Claw Iron Skin Technique was like the Rough Breathing Technique which focused on defence. With the offensive capabilities of the Eagle Claw, the technique was all-rounded.'

Fang Yuan was satisfied.

While the Eagle Claw Iron Skin Technique appeared to be commonplace, only those who had undergone many trials were qualified to train within the sects.

Fang Yuan hesitated for a while. He made no attempt to take the manual and instead, glanced at Zhou Tong: "Those who present gifts have things to request, what is your request?"

Zhou Tong was momentarily embarrassed. He said, "I owe you a big favour, and will willingly climb a mountain of blades or cross a sea of flames without batting an eyelid. The manual is nothing compared it. It is just that the world is cruel and deceitful and as such, I can only be shameless and make a request..."

He asked heavily, "What do you think of my youngest daughter, Wenxin?"

"Hmm..."

Fang Yuan rolled his eyes as he thought that Zhou Tong was offering his daughter as a way to entice him.

"Very energetic..."

He was speechless for a while before he came to a revelation.

"That's good!"

Zhou Tong relaxed his tone, "Truth to be told, my youngest daughter is very stubborn and I am unable to discipline her. Why not you accept my youngest daughter as a disciple?"

"No way!"

Fang Yuan immediately shook his head, "How is that possible? To be the master of your beloved daughter? It would be better to find someone else."

He did not want to put up with a troublemaker. At the same time, he admired Zhou Tong's cheek to make such a request. He was indeed unparalleled.

Furthermore, Wenxin might just be older than him.

"Will you not consider it?"

Zhou Tong was slightly disappointed.

Having Fang Yuan as the master of his child was his brainchild after a long night of thinking.

This was a plan with many benefits. Firstly, he would be able to entice such a mysterious and "abled" person. Secondly, his daughter would be protected. Furthermore, regardless of Fang Yuan's martial art ability or other skills, as long as he was able to learn medicine from Fang Yuan, he would be very much settled in his pursuit.

No matter how much he planned and calculated, he was unable to calculate that his daughter and Fang Yuan had crossed path before.

"I never had any thoughts of having a disciple before. I think it is better for you to take back the gift!"

Fang Yuan pushed the manual away from him.

Even though she would look pretty after dressing up and she had no choice but to follow his orders as she was the disciple, he did not want the lady to cause trouble by his side.

"Sigh, my daughter is indeed unfortunate! However, please keep this manual. If not, I would really be shameless... .."

Zhou Tong let out a long sigh.

"In any case, thank you very much..."

Fang Yuan was interested in the manual. Furthermore, he had saved the life of Zhou Tong. It was only right that he received the gift. As such, under Zhou Tong's insistence, he accepted the manual.

However, never could he had imagined that Zhou Tong had little morals!

Zhou Tong smiled and looked at the surroundings after Fang Yuan accepted the manual, "You live alone in the deep mountain with no one around. Let me present you a servant to take care of

you!"

"That will not be necessary?"

Fang Yuan rejected. He had too many secrets which might be leaked out quickly should there be another person in the deep valley with him.

He should protect the secrets that need to be kept while he still had the power to guard those secrets.

"It is settled!"

Zhou Tong waved his hand and said, "This is all according to your uncle's wishes. Don't worry, I have disciplined the servant. It is okay to scold or even hit her!"

He immediately stood up and walked out of the valet as if he was afraid that Fang Yuan would reject his arrangement.

Fang Yuan realised that there was a large group of people waiting outside. They appeared to be ready to move anytime.

"I will now take my leave!"

Zhou Tong saluted respectfully. Majority of the Zhou Family followed Zhou Tong and left.

"Sigh.... Virtuous nephew..."

Lin Benchu was the last to leave. He looked at Fang Yuan with regret and said, "Other than Leiyue, I have a few daughters... what a shame..."

"What happened?"

Fang Yuan was confused. He soon realized that a delicate figure was left behind after most of the people had left.

"Miss Zhou?"

He looked over and saw Zhou Wenxin with red puffy eyes as if she had just cried. She appeared to be full of grievance.

"What's wrong?"

Zhou Wenxin looked as if she was ready to cry. She curtsied, "I.... I have met you before!"

"What!"

Fang Yuan was shocked as he realized Zhou Tong's plan. He understood the reason behind why Lin Yuanwai gave him such a look before leaving.

Zhou Tong did not manage to entice Fang Yuan to make Wenxin his disciple. As such, he forced Wenxin onto Fang Yuan by giving her to Fang Yuan as a servant.

"What the!"

Looking at Wenxin who was full of grief, Fang Yuan struggled as he did not know what to do.

Chapter 26: The 4 Heavenly Gates

"Father....."

Outside the valley, Zhou Wenwu looked back in the direction of the secluded valley and said, "Let my sister becomes a slave to someone else? If this piece of news spread, what will the Zhou family's reputation become?"

"You are over worried. If both of us don't reveal anything, no one will know that it is Wenxin!"

Zhou Tong shook his head and said, "Your sister is too stubborn. It is time for her to look for someone to improve her character. Since I'm still alive now, it is still okay. When I'm dead, she will likely bring trouble for the Zhou family!"

"But....."

Zhou Wenwu disapproved. "I still feel that this is inappropriate. Sister's reputation....hold on a second. Father, you want to...."

"Haha, the young Master is not that kind of person. Even if so, what is there to lose out on if I have a son-in-law?"

Zhou Tong stroked his moustache and said, "Even though your sister is stubborn, her character is actually good in nature. We should let them get together first. Even if their relationship doesn't work out in the end, at least your sister is able to benefit from learning a few techniques from the Master!"

"Father, looks like you have much confidence in this Master!"

Even though Zhou Wenwu stayed silent, he knew that Zhou Tong had already made a decision and would not change it no matter what.

Also, the mindset here was different. Marrying off one's daughter or sister to a capable man meant that others would not look down on you.

"Not to mention....."

Zhou Tong heaved a long sigh, "Qingye City's situation is unpredictable. I am finding an alternative path for the Zhou family. Wenwu, don't follow me back to the city. Just head straight to Lieyang County and find your aunt. Stay there for a period of time and enjoy yourself!"

"The situation is in such a bad state now?"

Zhou Wenwu was surprised and this would mean that Zhou Tong would be on his own and away from the family. Zhou Wenwu angrily said, "Father, when Song Yujie died, you still haven't recovered from your injuries. The whole family was in the mountains. How will Song Zhong dare to accuse you?"

"In the past, he would not dare to. However, it is hard to say now...."

Zhou Tong shook his head.

A desperate person was the scariest. Song Zhong lost his child when he was old and since then, he had lived alone. It was hard to say what his mind had become.

Plus, he was also an elder. Zhou Tong, on the other hand, was just an Outer Sect Deacon and both of them were enemies of the same Sect.

If the other party lost his loved one and felt like committing suicide, he would also bring others along and die together!

Zhou Tong's face was gloomy and suspected that the poison case was likely to have originated from the Song family.

Of course, Zhou Wenwu wouldn't need to know about this suspicion.

"Alright, Father will with all of us. We have nothing to be afraid of since we did nothing wrong!"

Zhou Wenwu shuddered as Song Zhong, who broke through two

Gates, was a [Martial Artist (7th Gate)] expert!

If Song Zhong became crazy and started killing everyone in Qingye City, no one could stop him as the city was not part of the Spirit Returning Sect.

"Leave?"

Zhou Tong listened and gave a sorrowful smile. "You should leave with your sister first. I, being the father, shouldn't!"

This was just a prediction of the worst case scenario. It was totally unnecessary for now.

If the Zhou family migrated elsewhere, what would the rest of the Qingye City think?

If the Zhou family retreated and escaped to elsewhere when there was trouble, they would not have to think about living in the Qingye City ever again.

Nowadays, families here were like beasts as they had territories they controlled. Qingye City was the territory of the Zhou family. If this territory was abandoned, others would come and claim it.

Hence, the worse the situation became, the more Zhou Tong couldn't leave.

"Don't worry, Song Zhong and I are of the same Sect. With Lin family around, he will not dare to do anything funny!"

Even though Zhou Tong was worried, he still comforted Zhou Wenwu.

Even he himself also felt this way. If not, based on his cunning character, he would definitely not go back and die.

.....

"Your father sent you here to become my servant?"

At that moment, Fang Yuan stared at Zhou Wenxin and remained silent.

"Certainly.....certainly not...."

Zhou Wenxin immediately teared after hearing what Fang Yuan said.

Seeing that Fang Yuan stepped forward, she became even more terrified and retreated further with her hands clutching her shoulders. "What....what do you want? Don't come near me!"

"Why do you make me look like the bad guy?"

Fang Yuan stroked his chin and said, "I'm not interested in you. Even if I wanted to be mean, isn't it normal for me to have a servant?"

"Boohoo!"

After what he said, Zhou Wenxin couldn't endure any longer and cried out loud. "You are bullying me again....you are a bad guy...."

"Excuse me, you are being self-affectionate!"

Fang Yuan frowned and said, "I am preparing to send you out of the mountains today actually!"

"What?"

Zhou Wenxin stopped crying and lifted her head. Her teary eyes were staring right at Fang Yuan's.

She thought that she would be suffering since she landed onto a thief's hands. She didn't expect that Fang Yuan was not interested in her and was preparing to send her off!

At that moment, she felt humiliated instead of being fearful.

Previously, she thought that being a servant was humiliating. She didn't expect that being rejected to be someone's servant was even more humiliating!

"You are not willing to leave?"

Fang Yuan became a little interested and said, "Or would you prefer me to torture you?"

"I.....I....."

Zhou Wenxin bit her teeth tightly and couldn't wait to bite that cocky lad.

However, she recalled her father's advice on the situation of Qingye City and his scolding. She took a breath and said, "I will not leave!"

"What?"

Fang Yuan felt something strange about her sudden change in attitude. "Is your father leaving you? Looks like your family is seriously affected by the death of Song Yujie!"

"You can stay in this piece of wildland for as long as you want but I warn you first, do not enter the secluded valley or your life will be at risk!"

Fang Yuan gave a warning and decided to go back and ponder further.

Anyway, the Flower Fox Ferret would not be gentle towards anyone. If this lady indeed decided to explore the secluded valley, the Flower Fox Ferret will definitely not spare her life.

By that time, she would have become a fertilizer for the plants.

"No entry to the valley?"

Miss Zhou looked at her surroundings and heard noises made by the beasts from far. She shuddered and said, "Fine, I will not enter the valley!"

"Very well!"

Fang Yuan then left, leaving Zhou Wenxin behind.

With the camping resources her family gave, she definitely would survive out in the wild. Hence, Fang Yuan naturally wouldn't show any concern about her.

With regards to the news about her being a servant, which idiot

would believe? Who would want to get into trouble?

.....

"She still hasn't left?"

Soon, the sun began to set and the sky gradually became dark.

Fang Yuan was reading a manual about the Eagle Claw Iron Skin Technique and gesturing subconsciously. He met the Flower Fox Ferret and asked about Miss Zhou.

The Flower Fox Ferret shook its head like a human.

"Hmm....looks like there is big trouble brewing in Qingye City...."

Fang Yuan got up and exhaled out a long breath. He looked in the direction of Qingye City and murmured something.

The reason why Zhou Tong was thick-skinned enough to make his daughter stay put was so that his daughter could be protected and he could pull connections with Fang Yuan.

Fang Yuan made a decision after understanding the whole situation.

If he was satisfied with the gift, he would accommodate the lady for a few days before sending her back to the city. If he was not satisfied, he would send her back right away. He followed his inclinations and what could Zhou Tong do about it?

"This 'Eagle Claw Iron Skin Technique'.....".

After some serious considerations, Fang Yuan started to think carefully about the techniques that he had.

He was not only a young 4th Gate Martial Artist, he also had the Spirit Returning Heart Manual with him even though he was missing a few essential ones. After all, this manual was from the Spirit Returning Sect. The differentiation between the knowledge of martial arts and Gates mentioned in it should not be fake.

With such confidence, he looked at the Eagle Claw Iron Skin

Technique once more and concluded that it was impossible for Zhou Tong to trick him.

"So far I have yet to attain [Black Sand Palm (Grade 5)] and [Rough Breathing Technique (Grade 5)]. I need to find other techniques to learn but the Eagle Claw Iron Skin Technique is different!"

Fang Yuan's eyes glittered. "It can combine with the Eagle Claw Technique to become the Eagle Claw Iron Skin Technique. This will enable me to train to the peak of the 12 Golden Gates!"

With this benefit alone, Fang Yuan would gladly accept Zhou Tong's request for his daughter to seek protection here.

After all, this was very important with regards to strengthening himself.

The gift was timely. Even though he had saved Zhou Tong's life, it was still a huge gift that was not proportionate compared to what Fang Yuan had done for him.

"The 12 Golden Gates. The 4 Heavenly Gates come after the first 8 Gates. The 4 Gates are namely Yin, Yang, Heaven and Earth. In the end, one will break through the Heaven Gate and become Wu Zong!"

"The Spirit Returning Heart Manual mentions briefly about this while the Eagle Claw Iron Skin Technique doesn't. It clearly shows that Eagle Claw Iron Skin Technique is inferior as it does not mention anything related to Wu Zong!"

"But to me, having the Eagle Claw Iron Skin Technique is sufficient. Of course, I cannot give up Black Sand Palm. I should quickly train it to 5th Grade and then I will focus fully on attaining the Eagle Claw Iron Skin Technique!"

Fang Yuan was determined to do that.

If it was other martial artists who wanted to convert their techniques, they would have to take a long time.

For Fang Yuan, he was very familiar with the conversion and was able to get it with just a few practices.

After a night of training, he was satisfied by his improvement in the conversion. "If I am given another year to train, Song family, Spirit Returning Sect and others will have to step aside for me!"

"Keke!"

The Flower Fox Ferret suddenly came gesturing to Fang Yuan with its claws.

"Oh? Did something bad happened to Miss Zhou?"

Fang Yuan thought for a while and grabbed a handkerchief to wipe his sweat. He then reached the camping site, which was outside the valley.

He saw Zhou Wenxin curled up at a corner with her hands holding two flintstones, trying to light up a fire.

"Puff!"

Seeing her current state, Fang Yuan couldn't help but thought that Zhou Tong was funny.

It was already whimsical for Zhou Tong to send his daughter here to become a servant and even more amazing that she could take care of herself on her own.

Chapter 27: Destroying the Sect

Seeing the state of Zhou Wenxin, Fang Yuan frowned, turned around, returned to the valley and continued to drink his tea.

With an unreasonable attitude like hers, she deserved to be put through hardship. The best would be for her to not be able to take it any longer and leave on her own accord.

What was there to pity about?

Fang Yuan would never feel sorry for her.

Within the valley, Fang Yuan chopped wood, started a fire, cooked some porridge and made tea. The aroma filled the air and even to the entrance of the valley. Zhou Wenxin sniffed the aroma and her stomach was growling.

She unknowingly walked to the entrance of the valley, but froze there, afraid to take another step.

Zhou Wenxin was unreasonable but not stupid. She knew that if she did not heed Fang Yuan's warning to not enter the valley, no one, even her father, would be able to save her.

Furthermore, she could remember when her bodyguards were attacked by the white flash when she came to confront Fang Yuan the previous time. How would she dare to disobey?

She could not ignore the aroma coming out from the valley and continued eating her dry rations.

In the valley.

Fang Yuan and the Flower Fox Ferret each held a small bowl and ate the Vermillion Jade Rice Porridge, and had no intention of helping Zhou Wenxin.

The spiritual rice was so valuable to the extent that Fang Yuan made porridge with it. Regardless human or ferret, both value the spiritual rice a lot and have no intention of sharing it.

"Even my Pearl Jade Crystal Rice is also no ordinary rice, and eating it would bring many benefits to the body..."

Fang Yuan thought for a while, and sighed, "The spiritual tea is almost used up, and the Vermillion Jade Rice too... It has become painful for me to drink normal tea every morning, and if I run out of spiritual rice too, how can I survive?"

"Keke!"

The Flower Fox Ferret raised its little paws, as though it had the same sentiments.

"At the end of the day, the solution lies with the spiritual fertilizer!"

Fang Yuan looked at the Flower Fox Ferret, "When I asked you to bring me there previously, you were unwilling, and see what happened? I am now a martial artist of [Cultivation Level (Grade 4)], and I believe my abilities should be able to bring us there safely?"

"Keke?!"

The Flower Fox Ferret licked the last grain of porridge from its bowl before it was willing to put the bowl down, and went to an empty spot.

"Oh? You want to spar with me?"

Fang Yuan became energetic and knew that the Flower Fox Ferret was unsure of how good he had become. They needed to spar to confirm.

"Come on!"

Since killing Song Yujie, Fang Yuan realised that combat experience was far more valuable than the usual practice, and therefore was enthusiastic in taking on the Flower Fox Ferret.

"Don't take it easy on me!"

Fang Yuan took a deep breath, and both his palms became pitch-

black, with his veins protruding out like worms. Both of his forearms became far thicker than before.

'This is usually how my Inner Power circulates within me, and now it has even affected my physical form?'

The parts that were strengthened by the Black Sand Palm were the palms, forearms, chest, abdomen. As for his back, legs and head, the changes were minor.

He had no choice. The Black Sand Palm was a low-tier technique which did not focus on defence. Being able to strengthen his arms was good enough.

"Ssss!"

As for the Flower Fox Ferret, he felt a little scared, after seeing the transformation Fang Yuan went through.

Whoosh!

Using his paws, the Flower Fox Ferret pounced towards Fang Yuan in a white flash like a lightning.

"Chi! Chi!"

Its talons were sharp and quick, like a knife.

"Good, don't take it easy!"

Fang Yuan struck his palm out.

He only fought with the Flower Fox Ferret once, which was their first encounter under the moonlight. The Flower Fox Ferret was not as smart then, and Fang Yuan did not know martial arts back then.

Now, both of them have their own improvements, which made Fang Yuan excited and eager to find out the Flower Fox Ferret's true standard.

"Boundless Black Sand!"

His right palm became black and had a whiff of fragrance; it was

mildly hypnotizing.

"Hissss!"

The Flower Fox Ferret did not dare to go head-on with Fang Yuan. It curled into a shape of a letter 'Z' and ingeniously avoided Fang Yuan's palm before curling behind Fang Yuan, attacking him from the back.

"Reverse Palm!"

Fang Yuan turned around and immediately struck out another palm, and the Flower Fox Ferret avoided it easily. However, there were fresh claw marks on Fang Yuan's arm now.

"Hmm? Aggressive in attack, but weak in defence!"

Seeing the Flower Fox Ferret, Fang Yuan came to a conclusion.

He focused on his arms and channelled energy to it. The small wound was nothing to him, as the muscles contracted and stopped the bleeding.

"Good! One more time!"

Fang Yuan became increasingly excited as the battle ensued. He heaved, with both palms striking out, bringing with it a strong gust of wind and poison, which led the Flower Fox Ferret to retreat, and it did not dare to advance a single step.

'Mmm... The Flower Fox Ferrer's true ability is on par with a martial artist at the 7th Gate, and if not for me mastering my outer skills, I would lose... But my defence is too weak and any martial artist in the 4th Gate would be able to break through. I can only use speed to make up for my lack of defence.....'

After a long fight, Fang Yuan was breathless, and raised his hand, "Let's stop here!"

He needed to use all his energy and force the Flower Fox Ferret to retreat, and that took a lot of his Inner Power.

If he continued to use his Inner Power, he would have lost to the

Flower Fox Ferret.

'If I was a martial artist of [Cultivation Level (Grade 5)], I would be able to hold on for a while more. Especially if I am able to break through Pain Gate, concentrate my Inner Power, then I would be able to last much longer, and from there should be able to win the Flower Fox Ferret...'

Fang Yuan clenched his fist and felt happy for his progress.

He was even happier when he realised that his experience bar was filled up by a large portion for 'Black Sand Palm', and smiled. "Very good, Flower Fox Ferret, next time we shall do this a few times each day!"

"Hissss..."

On the other end, a tired Flower Fox Ferret stuck out his tongue, because it was extremely tired for it to remain focused and go against such a strong palm.

"Keke!"

Fang Yuan's progress shocked the Flower Fox Ferret, as he made a sign with his paws.

"Can we do it now?"

Fang Yuan understood him and was ecstatic.

Could he finally reveal where all the spiritual fertilizer was hidden?

Once he had the endless supply of spiritual fertilizer, the production of spiritual tea and spiritual rice would not be a problem anymore, and his progress would be much faster!

...

Qinghe County, Kou Village.

The village was considered wealthy within the county, and the majority of the people here have the surname 'Kou', and of course,

was the origin of a Palm Technique Master, the creator of Black Sand Palm, Kou Feng!

But right now, in the entire Kou Village, there were corpses everywhere.

A large fire rose to a few feet high and burnt down the entire village garden. In the village, members of the Spirit Returning Sect gave no considerations and killed anyone on sight.

As compared to the entire Qinghe county, the resistance within the Kou Village was small.

"Elder Song's orders are not to leave a single soul within the Kou Village!"

"Kill!"

...

Within the mess, from a random house, a black shadow lept out, with both palms pitch-black full of energy. Those members of the Spirit Returning Sect who came close to him held their throats, became pale and fell to the ground.

"Song Zhong, you bully!"

The black shadow was an old person with white hair, "The rules of the Martial World states that it is of no fault of the others, and even there is a reason, you only look for me, how dare you do this?"

"Rules of the Martial World?"

The cunning Song Zhong responded.

He floated extremely quickly towards the old man, like a ghost.

"Black Sand Palm!"

The old man concentrated on his life's training, struck out both palms, harnessing the most poisonous palms.

People only know Black Sand Palm for its aggressiveness, and

many did not know that the strongest form of Black Sand Palm is by combining it with poison. This move of his revealed that he trained directly under the Kou Family. The old man broke through the Pain Gate and was a martial artist of [Cultivation Level (Grade 6)]. He was naturally at the peak of Black Sand Palm.

"Bank Sand Palm, release poison!"

Song Zhong remained calm, did not take him seriously and drew a circle with his right hand.

Kacha!

The old man was shocked as his right palm met his left palm. The intense energy and poison broke both his arms, as he spat out blood and toppled.

"For someone who is able to train the Black Sand Palm to break through the 6th Gate, you are already a talent. What a pity you won't be able to find out the greatness of what comes after the Pain Gate!"

Song Zhong continued, "When one encounters Pain Gate, he will feel pain! When one reaches Shock Gate, he will hurt his mental state! Death Gate is the worst, if one cannot break through it, he will die! The 3 Perilous Gates, are increasingly harder to break through, and I have already broken through the Shock Gate. My Inner Power, when focused, can be as hard as metal. How will your weak poison even stand any chance against me? Now that I've counter-attacked, your life is on the line!"

"Elder Song.....I have indeed offended you in the past, but I don't think I deserve this!"

The old man imagined death and was filled with sorrow.

"It doesn't matter if you have offended me because I am willing to reason with you, but now that Yujie is dead, why should I care..."

Song Zhong calmly told him, but the old man became increasingly afraid, "Are you suspecting that it's me? No, that's

impossible!"

"It doesn't matter if it is you, all of you disciples of the Kou Family will all die!"

Song Zhong pointed his finger at the old man's forehead.

Such a person who was able to break through 6 Gates, and train the Black Sand Palm to such a level, was all but a corpse lying on the floor.

Song Zhong didn't feel much happier after the death of the old man, but felt suspicious, "If what those servants said was true, and Yujie died under the poisonous Black Sand Palm, and yet not by this old man, then how would the other disciples be of any match against Yujie? Did I miss out anything?"

Chapter 28: 5th Gate

Time flowed like water and passed with the ease of a cloth on a weaving machine.

In the blink of an eye, another 10 odd days passed.

"This is the last bit of Vermillion Jade Rice!"

Fang Yuan tilted his head backwards and poured the Vermillion Jade porridge into his open mouth. He immediately felt a warm surge of energy circulate his body.

He looked at his stats window.

"Mm...Black Sand Palm (Grade 4), Proficiency points at 99% already?"

Although the Flower Fox Ferret had confirmed that he had the strength to advance towards lands with spiritual fertiliser, Fang Yuan wanted a more solid guarantee for himself.

Several days of hard work had allowed Fang Yuan to hone his Black Sand Palm technique to a new peak. Even the Eagle Claw Cloth Technique had started to become easier for him. Fang Yuan had broken past [Martial Artist (4th Gate)], which gave him the strong foundations necessary to make his execution of the technique a force to reckon with.

"The Eagle Claw Iron Skin Technique provides protection that is more balanced compared to the Black Sand Palm Technique. Danger lurks in the spiritual land. Being well-versed in one more defence technique wouldn't hurt!"

Fang Yuan mumbled to himself, then suddenly adopted a fighting stance.

"Flower Fox Ferret!"

"Hiss!"

The Flower Fox Ferret appeared in a flash of white.

In the face of Fang Yuan's friendly invitation to battle, the ferret looked rather frightened.

After all, from the past few days of training, Fang Yuan's "madness" had intimidated it. Coming into contact with the toxic wind stirred up by the Black Sand Palm technique was not a pleasant experience.

"Haha...when the next Spiritual Rice crop is ready for harvesting, I'll let you eat to your heart's content. How does this sound?"

Fang Yuan knew that the ferret was extremely keen on spiritual rice.

"Hiss!"

At the mention of spiritual rice, the ferret was immediately convinced and jumped at Fang Yuan.

"Excellent!"

Fang Yuan stood his ground confidently without a hint of fear. His hands erupted into a flurry of fists. They looked like black windmills that gave off a dark and menacing wind.

"Huff puff!"

After a while, the Flower Fox Ferret jumped out of the fighting ring and looked alarmed at the figure inside.

"So...it seems like Black Sand Palm (Grade 5) brings me back to the basics!"

He noticed that his hands, which had bulging veins previously, were back to their original states. Even his arms, where the muscles were flexed before, had become lean again.

Still, Fang Yuan could feel internal energy coursing powerfully through his vessels.

Although it seemed like Fang Yuan was back to normal, the potential amount of damage he was capable of dealing had increased by a few times!

He checked out his stats window and noticed that the description of his Black Sand Palm technique had been updated.

Black Sand Palm(5th Grade)-----It is an external technique that has already reached its peak. This causes the user's hands to regain its original look and make them tougher than steel. It is able to shatter gold and break jade, enhanced with poison, and strengthens inner power.

"Inner power?!"

Fang Yuan could indeed feel a more intense inner power flushing his hands, spreading to his arms, chest and even his lower abdomen. It was as if he had become a small oven and was nurturing something within him.

"Inner power woven into a rope-like form to become inner force! This is the essence of the 6th Gate, the Pain Gate.....if one failed to break through the Gate, his whole body would be gravely wounded and he might even die!"

At this point, Fang Yuan had already reached the deep end of martial arts cultivation. If he lost focus for even a moment, the consequences would be extremely dire.

"But now..."

Fang Yuan closed his eyes and took a deep breath.

"Kacha!"

A literal feeling in his gut told him that he had broken through the Gate.

"Martial Artist (5th Gate), successfully challenged!"

Fang Yuan had only been training for two months, and he had already broken through 5 Gates. This was unprecedented. This was prodigious!

"I have my proficiency points to thank, not to mention the Vermillion Jade Rice and Questioning Heart Tea!"

Fang Yuan did not allow himself to become complacent and looked at his stats.

"Name: Fang Yuan

Essence: 2.7

Spirit: 2.5

Magic: 1.5

Age: 18

Cultivation: [Martial Arts (5th Gate)]

Skills: [Black Sand Palm (Grade 5)], [Eagle Claw Iron Skin Technique (Grade 3)]

Specialities: [Medicine (Level 2)], [Botany (Level 3)]

"Eagle Claw Iron Skin technique — Internal and External martial art technique. Whole and without flaws. When trained to Grade 12, by then the body will be impenetrable and resistant to hurt. Complemented by the inner strength of the Eagle Claw! Currently at Grade 3!"

"The later Gates of martial arts cultivation were becoming unnerving. The fifth Gate alone gave me an increase of 0.5 each in both Spirit and Essence. It's a pity that my Magic didn't increase..."

Now, Fang Yuan also realised that Magic was the hardest to level up among the three stats.

He could trigger a prodigious rate of improvement previously all because of the Questioning Heart Tea and the Meditative Tea Ceremony.

The path of the martial arts becomes increasingly difficult as one progress. It is very easy to suffer a rebound while breaking through the Pain Gate. Breaking through the Shock Gate is taxing on both the heart and the mind, and tests a martial artist's [magical energy](#)! If the martial artist's magical energy is too weak, he will suffer a rebound and might become mentally unstable..."

With the Spirit Returning Heart Manual and the Eagle Claw Iron Skin Technique, Fang Yuan could approach the 12 Golden Gates with the utmost confidence.

Of course, in terms of danger, the Pain and Shock Gates paled in comparison to the Death Gate.

Failure to conquer the Pain and Shock Gates would result in serious damage to the body, but at least he would live.

The Death Gate, however, lived by its name. Failure would result in death.

Because of this, even Song Zhong and the old timer martial artists had to be very certain about their chances before attempting to break through!

"And Zhou Tong, who has already mastered all there is to master in the fifth Gate and with his Iron Skin technique at hand, did not dare to challenge the Pain Gate. With his timid character, he will never advance further!"

Fang Yuan shook his head in disdain.

Those with martial arts manuals in their possession, and yet did not dare to make use of them for practice, were the most foolish people in the world.

To be fair, Zhou Tong was the patriarch of the noble Zhou Family, and the family rose or fell together with him. He could not afford to compromise himself in any way.

But the price he had to pay was meekness in the face of more skilled opponents, who had no qualms about taking advantage of him.

"However, according to the masters from the books, and based on my own observations, these 3 Perilous Gates might be intimidating, but as long as the martial artist has an abundance of Spirit, Essence, and Magic, he'll be able to cope well!"

Because of this, Fang Yuan had every confidence in the spiritual fertilizer.

He had to stock up on tea and rice in order to push these three stats into new highs so that he could smash through the 3 Perilous Gates at one go.

"Alright, let's set off today!"

Fan Yuan lifted a bamboo basket onto his back and called out to the Flower Fox Ferret before heading out of the Valley.

When he arrived at the campsite of the Zhou Family, it was apparent that Zhou Weixin had disappeared.

'A servant of the Zhou Family came by with news that Song Zhong had not become totally mad the other day, which set Old Zhou's heart at ease. Furthermore, Miss Zhou finally went home grudgingly after her torturous experience. This is just as well. There is less trouble for me!'

Fang Yuan was dressed in green robes. He let out a sigh of relief.

After all, Song Zhong and Old Zhou were from the same Sect. Song Zhong had lost much and took revenge on his old enemies with a dogged determination. It was worthy to note that he held back from attacking Old Zhou.

He was but an elder of the Spirit Returning Sect and was not invincible.

"The marks that I left behind were definitely insignificant. As long as I do not reveal my skill, especially the Black Sand Palm, who would suspect me...?"

Fang Yuan was extremely self-assured.

The safer the Zhou Family was, the safer he was.

As long as time dragged on, and he kept improving, none of this would matter anymore.

"Ferret, it's your time to shine!"

Fang Yuan patted the ferret's head. Both of them then sped into the forest and disappeared.

Qingye City.

"Useless piece of trash!"

Song Zhong let out a roar. Song San immediately spat out blood and was thrown back several metres onto the ground.

"I wanted information on all the Black Sand Palm experts in the county. I gave you so much time, and yet you turned up with so little..."

Song Zhong began to walk forward slowly as he glanced at the bloodied Song San, his features regaining composure.

"Spare me, Master!"

Song San kowtowed repeatedly.

"The Black Sand Palm is widely practised with so many variations. Song San feels that..."

"Pow!"

Song San's speech had been cut short by a kick to his chest.

"Are you saying that Yujie made a mistake? That he had poor eyesight?"

"Song San did not mean that!"

Song San clutched his chest in pain. He did not dare to even make a sound.

"...Yujie naturally would not be in the wrong. It must be the servants who made mistakes in their anxiousness to leave. Maybe they heard wrong. Or perhaps...please give me more time Master!"

"Hmph, get lost!"

Following Song Zhong's bellow, Song San ran out of the hall

wretchedly, his eyes dripping with malice the moment he was out of sight.

"Master!"

After Song San left, a female disciple walked in and greeted Song Zhong with a bow.

"I have followed your instructions and made preparations. Zhou Tong has lowered his guard and has summoned his former disciples..."

"Excellent!"

Song Zhong calmed down slightly after receiving the news, except that his enraged expression gave way to a sly one.

"Let's wait for his precious son to return, and we can deal with them all in one go!"

"But Master, the Zhou Family is one of our own. Additionally, it can be confirmed that during the period where Yujie left us, Zhou Tong was recuperating after being severely poisoned. He had nothing to do with Yujie's death..."

The female disciple looked at Song Zhong with uncertainty.

"...So?"

Song Zhong squinted at her.

"You think I have no idea? We played a part in his poisoning. And Zhou Tong has been in contact with the elders in his territory, telling them that I have been a tyrant....We have to kill this sheep in a display of power to show the rest that I'm not to be trifled with!"

The female disciple listened in silence and spoke after a long while.

"This is ruinous for the Sect."

"Hehe..."

Song Zhong cackled.

"I'll have nothing to do with the downfall of the Zhou Family. It would be the doing of roaming gangsters. As long as we do not leave behind any evidence, who would dare to take an Elder to task?"

"You are mad!"

The female disciple shivered. She could see that her master was becoming more extreme following the death of his beloved son.

"Yujie..."

Song Zhong became oblivious to his surroundings and muttered under his breath.

"All the people that you've ever disliked will not escape. And all those that you were fond of, Papa will deliver to you..."

As the sun began to set, shadows danced on Song Zhong's face like demons around a fire.

The 'Magic' in Fang Yuan's stats window is an indicator of how much magical energy he has.

Chapter 29: Spiritual Land

A thick fog covered the vast green mountains.

In the forest, Fang Yuan and the Flower Fox Ferret were traversing at a speed which could not be seen by the naked eye.

He came to the forest to look for the spiritual fertilizer, which was essential for the development of his skills. Thus, he was rushing to find it.

They reached the Clear Spirit Mountain by noon.

"Come, let's eat!"

Fang Yuan looked at the sky and only saw a faint light from the scorching sun as they were covered by the surrounding trees.

The spiritual Vermillion Jade Rice had run out. Hence, he naturally had to make his rice balls with the Vermillion Jade Rice. This was rather tormenting for him as he was picky about his food.

Similarly, the Flower Fox Ferret was in disdain when it realised the rice balls were not made from the Vermillion Jade Rice. It dived into a nearby bush and dragged a chicken out not long after.

"You are indeed picky!"

Fang Yuan mocked the Flower Fox Ferret and then removed the intestines of the chicken. He went to a river to wash the blood off the chicken and seasoned it with some salt that he brought. He then wrapped the chicken with leaves and started roasting it over the fire.

Not long after, a freshly roasted chicken was made.

As he removed the wrapping leaves, he could smell a strong aroma.

"Oohh.....It melts in the mouth and is not greasy at all. It tastes so fresh...."

This dish also appeared in his dreams. Fang Yuan randomly made this dish on the spot and the Flower Fox Ferret really liked it. This made the Flower Fox Ferret tempted to get another chicken.

"Dreams do come true....."

Fang Yuan had realised that what he dreamt did come true in real life. His life in the dream world was very similar to his in real life.

"Or.....in the slang of the other world, this is a form of 'breakthrough', the only difference is that the current me is the combination of both memories/sides, with equal parts of both worlds....."

He became clear and understood the situation. "Currently, I am Fang Yuan!"

.....

"Let's go!"

Fang Yuan continued on with the Flower Fox Ferret after finishing their lunch.

The Clear Spirit Mountain was indeed deep. There were many rare birds and beasts, with leopards, tigers, wolves and jackals forming the majority. Not many old huntsmen and herb collectors dared to come this deep.

"Roar!"

A very loud roar was coming from the front. A giant tiger with a white forehead jumped out from the trees.

"There are indeed many beasts in this forest!"

Without blinking his eye, Fang Yuan attacked the tiger effortlessly with his right palm. "Black Sand Palm!"

[Black Sand Palm (5th Grade)] gave an ultimate effect from the power it produced. However, both arms and palms did not have any changes, except for a black circle which would appear on the palm when executed.

"Bang!"

Fang Yuan hit the tiger's skull with much force, causing it to roll onto the ground.

This giant tiger had a thick skin. It rolled on the ground and was able to get behind Fang Yuan. It then used its tail like an iron whip and whipped his back.

"Piak!"

Fang Yuan's clothing was torn into pieces.

"Hmm? This tiger is definitely not normal. Even though it is not a spiritual beast, it is not much different from the mutated Pearl Tail Snake previously....."

Fang Yuan was surprised that it was able to survive his Black Sand Palm even though he knew that its skull was the strongest part of the body.

What about the tail?

Fang Yuan had Iron Skin for defence and this tiger had gotten weaker. It was no match for him.

He touched his back and couldn't feel any pain. From the perspective of the Flower Fox Ferret, a fading red print could be seen on his back.

"Roar!"

The giant tiger realised that Fang Yuan was too powerful and decided to run away.

However, not long after it escaped, it became like a drunkard and fell onto the ground, with a dark coloured blood flowing out.

"The combination of the Pearl Tail Snake's poison and Black Sand Palm is a perfect one indeed!"

He then sighed. "Even though I executed the Black Sand Palm, it is actually the poison encapsulated in the Black Sand Palm that

killed the tiger. Should I just call it Poison Sand Palm instead?"

"Unfortunately the tiger's bones....."

At that moment, the tiger was poisoned to death and its body was badly destroyed. Fang Yuan regretted a little after seeing the state of the tiger.

"Keke!"

The Flower Fox Ferret passed by proudly but was disdained by the corpse of the tiger.

To it, with the exception of the spiritual tea and spiritual rice, how could a piece of meat be called meat if it was not edible?

"However.....there is definitely something different in this mountain!"

Fang Yuan continued on with a serious look.

From the Flower Fox Ferret, to the Pearl Tail Snake and then the giant tiger. This showed one thing.

This Clear Spirit Mountain is definitely something!

Or maybe, it was due to the influence of something mysterious present here.

The place where the Flower Fox Ferret was bringing Fang Yuan to might be connected to that influence. There could be a chance for them to meet the owner!

"Keke!"

As they go in deeper into the mountain, the Flower Fox Ferret became even more excited. It was also alert and used its claws to gesture to Fang Yuan.

"We are almost reaching our destination?"

Fang Yuan bucked up and looked at the sky. The sun was setting and the place was going to be dark soon.

"We have a little bit of time left. Let's go and have a quick look!"

Fang Yuan bit his teeth and went into the bushes with the Flower Fox Ferret.

"Hooo"

The surroundings suddenly started to fog up, causing the visibility to be poor.

"This fog.....something is wrong!"

It was normal for the top of the mountain to be fogged up all year round but this white fog was way too strong.

If he were to go a few steps deeper, he would not be able to see his fingers. Fang Yuan felt a huge feeling of weariness. His eyelids became heavy and he started to close his eyes unconsciously. He then went into a deep sleep.

"Sleep.....sleep....."

He could hear a voice whispering into his ears and he became in a trance.

"Hold on a second....I shouldn't sleep. If I do sleep, everything will be over...."

Fang Yuan had the magical energy that was beyond a normal human being and it proved its effectiveness. However, it only allowed Fang Yuan to stay alert.

Even though he was aware of his surroundings, he was unable to move his limbs, which made it impossible for him to retreat.

"The hell with it, how does the Flower Fox Ferret make it through here previously if I am like that now?"

Fang Yuan was confused. He then heard noises made by the Flower Fox Ferret and it was getting further away from him.

"Sleep! Sleep....Once you sleep, everything will be alright...."

The weariness got even stronger. Fang Yuan closed and opened his eyes. He shook his head and bit his teeth, "Damn it.....There is

something wrong with the fog!"

He forced himself to sit cross-legged and summon forth his inner power to counter the fog.

Normally, his power from his Dantian was able to defend against any threats. This time, it seemed that his power was useless when dealing with such great power from the fog.

"Go to sleep....go to sleep....."

The whisper beside his ear became blurred.

Fang Yuan shuddered and a scene appeared in front of his eyes.

A white-haired elder who was dressed in white was sitting beside the spring water and tasting tea. "My Meditative Tea Ceremony is based on the foundation of trust and respect, breaking away from fate, curbing evil intentions and simplifying matters. Only with these would you have a genuine outlook, peace, and be set on the path to pursue dao."

"A man of heart is a master of his own body and the lord of the gods. He sits still to achieve wisdom, and the slightest movement would bring upon his downfall. In the land of fantasy, the only truth is: Who would be able to comprehend the falsehood within the sweet promises? They dreamt big and underwent multiple events before they realised that there was more to life and that their hearts had changed. Who would have been aware that it was just a big dream..."

.....

"Master!"

A series of his memories appeared. Fang Yuan then realised he was not drowsy anymore. In fact, he was way more alert than before.

He now could confirm that Master Wenxin was not an ordinary person!

Master Wenxin didn't really pass down anything to him.

The Meditative Tea Ceremony was the only precious gift from him.

"Keke!"

"Keke!"

At that moment, when Fang Yuan looked at the white fog, it was no different from any other mountain fog. The Flower Fox Ferret beside him was getting impatient while waiting. It even dragged a very long banana leaf over and the leaf contained cool spring water.

"Are you alright?"

Fang Yuan suddenly understood what happened. "Does the mysterious magical power here target only humans? Or is it because the minds of the wild beasts are pure and that's why they are not affected?"

Obviously, the Flower Fox Ferret had been through here quite a few times already but it did not have the same experience as Fang Yuan. If not, it wouldn't have brought Fang Yuan to this place.

"It's been hard on you!"

After understanding this point, Fang Yuan didn't make things difficult for the Flower Fox Ferret and drank the spring water straight from the banana leaf.

"This water...."

The spring water was clear and sweet. The water cooled his body.

Fang Yuan only drank one sip and he felt way better than before.

"Good spring water!"

He started praising the water.

Fang Yuan had drank before many types of spring water but this spring water with such quality was rare.

"Nope, this is not normal spring water. It is definitely spiritual water!"

Fang Yuan's eyes glittered and asked the Flower Fox Ferret, "Where does this spring water come from?"

"Keke!"

The Flower Fox Ferret stood upright and pointed forward with its claws.

"There again!"

He gave a serious look.

He guessed that the place deep in this fog was probably the source of the mutations that were happening throughout the whole Clear Spirit Mountain. Things like the spiritual fertiliser, spiritual beasts and spiritual water were formed because of that place!

"It seems like I have to go and visit this place...."

Fang Yuan got up and looked determined. "Spiritual land?"

The spiritual land was formed by heaven's will and created by the gathering of earthly energy. It was filled with all kinds of spiritual plants and plenty of spiritual beasts. It is an excellent piece of fertile and sacred land, and a treasure trove!

Chapter 30: Spiritual Bird

"Spiritual land..."

Fang Yuan looked ahead, his eyes full of passion.

Even the lowest grade of spiritual land was a great piece of treasure, and of course, with the rewards came the danger as well.

These spiritual grasses and flowers must have many spiritual beasts lurking around. Take for instance the previous encounter with the Pearl Tail Snake which was guarding the Poisonous Dragon Grass, there had to be many dangerous animals around all these spiritual plants.

"No risk, no rewards, right?"

Fang Yuan clenched his teeth, and looked determined, "Flower Fox Ferret, show me the way!"

The Flower Fox Ferret frequented this route, and it was safe the previous few times it came from here. As long as Fang Yuan stayed wary of the dangerous fog, he should be fine.

"Keke!"

The Flower Fox Ferret was very clever and could lead the way in front, while Fang Yuan followed behind, focusing his inner power to his ears so that he could pick up any danger from the surroundings.

The dangerous fog no longer had the same effect as before, since Fang Yuan recalled his Master's teachings and utilised the Meditative Tea Ceremony.

After a short while, the mountain fog dissipated and the view ahead appeared.

"That is..."

Fang Yuan witnessed the view in front of him and was in awe.

Within his vision, he could see a small green peak covered in a circle of white fog, as though the sky had curtains covering. Once he was inside, the sky was blood red, and the view of the sunset was spectacular.

"Can the wall of fog even cover the entire mountain peak?"

Fang Yuan felt weird, and if not for the Flower Fox Ferret, who was guiding him all the way, he would have been mesmerised and gotten lost.

This place was much more inconspicuous as compared to the secluded valley.

"Hu..."

"Wait up!"

Fang Yuan took a deep breath and felt different.

"Even the air here smells fresher, and with it brings spirituality... A human being can extend his lifespan if he lives here, and if one practises martial arts here, he will experience amazing progress!"

His eyes glittered, "Based on this magical feeling, there is no doubt that this is a piece of spiritual land!"

Fang Yuan felt as though he had won the top prize.

But at this stage, he remained calm, followed the Flower Fox Ferret and ran towards the Green Peak.

Behind the Green Peak was a ridge of barren cliffs, with many black spots on it. As the sky darkened, it became increasingly hard to see.

The Flower Fox Ferret became alert, waved his paws and remained completely silent.

Fang Yuan took in a deep breath and followed it to the bottom of the cliff.

"Eh? This is..."

Under the cliff was a small lake. The lake water was green as jade, and surrounding the lake was white sand all around.

At the bottom of the cliff, the smell of the spiritual fertilizer filled the air, and he became speechless as he looked at the beach ahead.

"This 'beach'... It is all made up of spiritual fertilizer, so much... so much spiritual fertilizer!"

He mumbled to himself and was happy beyond words.

He already knew how the spiritual fertilizer looked like. It was made up of translucent droplets and was everywhere around the beach. A few obvious holes seemed to be dug up by some animal, and the droplets became increasingly transparent with increasing deepness into the beach and the layer on top was pure white.

"It seems that the more transparent the spiritual fertilizer, the more effective it is... I don't even know what formed this beach, I've struck gold!"

Fang Yuan's eyes glittered. He took out his bamboo basket, rolled up his sleeves and was prepared to collect the spiritual fertilizer.

"Squawk!"

At this moment, a fist-sized white bird with red eyes landed on a neighbouring tree and began to squeak in anger.

Its squawking disturbed a neighbouring large bird, which was about 10 times the size of it, like a large eagle. It flew straight at Fang Yuan.

"Hmm? Another type of spiritual bird, this place is indeed very conducive to spiritual things!"

Fang Yuan remained calm, his right hand forming into a claw-shape, and as quick as lightning, "Eagle Claw!"

"Whoosh!"

Amid a short squawk, large amounts of white feathers scattered around.

This large bird could be considered to be a mutant at best, half spiritual bird, but still not a real spiritual animal, so how could it be Fang Yuan's match?

With one swipe, Fang Yuan's Eagle Claw broke its neck.

"Ha ha... Flower Fox Ferret, we have an additional dish for dinner!"

Fang Yuan tossed the spiritual bird into the bamboo basket and smiled at the Flower Fox Ferret.

However, at this point in time, the Flower Fox Ferret jumped at Fang Yuan and pulled on his clothing as though it was running for its life.

"This..."

Seeing how it reacted, it was obvious that it could sense that something extremely dangerous was approaching. Its fur stood up straight.

Fang Yuan decided not to care about the spiritual fertilizer at this moment, picked up his bamboo basket and disappeared like the wind.

"Squawk!"

At his back, the small white bird's squawking increased in intensity.

"Squawk!"

"Squawk!"

...

All the surrounding birds in the vicinity began to squawk, one by one flapped their wings and flew down. It was the Red-eyed White birds from the previous encounter.

"Hisss..."

Fang Yuan was scared out of his wits, and channelled all his inner

power to his legs, and ran for his life.

He had to run!

The Red-eyed White Birds covered the entire sky behind him!

With their numbers, even if they were half-spiritual birds, real spiritual beasts would still be no match for them!

The Flower Fox Ferret was also running for its life.

"I finally know why the Flower Fox Ferret didn't want me to come here!"

Fang Yuan ran and his thoughts ran faster, "With their numbers, a normal person could never outrun them and would be pecked to death!"

"To the fog!"

He was a decisive person and chose to run into the fog wall.

The birds chased from above, and even though Fang Yuan had a head start and had the assistance of the inner power, he would be outrun in no time, and the only hope he had was to hide in the dense forest or fog to lose the birds.

"Whoosh!"

The Flower Fox Ferret did not lie to Fang Yuan.

At his current speed, he disappeared into the fog as soon as the Red-eyed White Birds formed a large group and began to chase after them.

"Squawk!"

Having lost track of Fang Yuan, the murderer of their friend, the large group of birds could only circle around the mountain and squawk in sorrow... It could be heard around the entire spiritual land.

After venting their anger, the birds returned to their nest at the top of the cliff, and gradually quietened down.

"Phew..."

Fang Yuan heaved a sigh of relief and dared not to agitate the birds again. He slowly retreated out of the place.

Outside.

After experiencing the spiritual energy within the spiritual land, Fang Yuan felt that the outside world was unbearable, as though the heavens and earth were polluted.

The truth was that the environment of the entire Clear Spirit Mountain was pretty good, but he still felt this way as he compared it to the spiritual land.

"Spiritual land!"

Fang Yuan eyed on the land covered by the fog, and felt emotional, "This spiritual land is all mine!"

He had no reason not to feel this way!

A natural spiritual land was a huge treasure itself, who knew what other spiritual plants might be hidden on the Green Peak, and the spiritual fertilizer, all these were enough for Fang Yuan to drool over.

"And the spiritual birds... Such big birds, the king of these birds must be a spiritual beast, and may even be a grade higher than the Flower Fox Ferret!"

Fang Yuan's biggest wish was to own the entire Green Peak and take it as his own, then shift his spiritual tea and spiritual rice over here.

Nothing in the secluded valley could match up to this spiritual land!

"A pity... I am still not strong enough..."

Fang Yuan frowned, "With so many spiritual birds around, I'm afraid only Wu Zongs can put up a fight?"

Thinking to this point, he looked at his bamboo basket.

Other than a thin layer of spiritual fertilizer, there was a spoil of his battle!

"Ha ha... Flower Fox Ferret, didn't you complain that the beggar chicken is not enough? We can enjoy tonight!"

Fang Yuan carefully observed the spiritual bird in his hands.

It had feathers as white as snow, but its eyes were blood red. It also had talons that glittered like a precious metal, and to top it off, a sharp beak, like a tiny eagle.

After sparring with this spiritual bird, Fang Yuan knew that it was rather strong.

Although it might seem that it could not withstand a single move from Fang Yuan, after all, Fang Yuan was a martial artist at the 5th Gate, equivalent to a deacon from the outside world!

Looking at how fast the Red-eyed White Birds attacked if it was a normal person, a peck and a claw would have been able to dig out an eye!

"What type of mutant bird is this? Why have I not heard of it before? What is it called? Red-Eyed Falcon? White-feathered crow? Red-eyed White Bird?"

Fang Yuan felt like giving it a name and decided, "Mmm... Red-Eyed White Bird sounds best, Ha ha.....I am indeed talented in giving names..."

Unknowingly, the white ferret, who was also forced to adopt the name of Flower Fox Ferret, was speechless and rolled its eyes.

Of course, it only felt unjust for a short while.

The Flower Fox Ferret threw all pride away when he saw Fang Yuan cooked a meal of Beggar Bird Meat. He circled Fang Yuan like a dog trying to please its owner.

"This is creepy, you are a ferret, not a dog, so act like one and

have some ferret pride!"

Fang Yuan didn't know to cry or laugh at the scene, tore the Beggar Bird into half and threw it towards the Flower Fox Ferret.

"Keke!"

Flower Fox Ferret pounced and munched on it, and let out a satisfying growl.

To it, what's a little dignity worth when there's good food?

"Mm? Is the taste that good?"

Seeing the Flower Fox Ferret, Fang Yuan took a bite off the bird, and his expression changed.

"This bird meat is more tender than a chicken; it's fragrant and nice too. Delicious! Delicious!"

He gobbled down the bird, rubbed his tummy with satisfaction and felt warmth rising within his body. His expression changed, "This nutrition level should be comparable to a meal of the Vermillion Jade Rice right? As expected from a spiritual bird!"

Chapter 31: Trouble

It was dawn.

There was fog surrounding the Green Peak and the spiritual land. Fang Yuan looked at the cliff with anticipation.

A white figure approached the beach, stretched out its claws and seemed as though it was rummaging through something.

"Squawk!"

Above the cliff, numerous Red-eyed White Birds were flapping their wings and pecking around, not aware of the situation on the beach.

In a short while, the white figure retreated and returned to the fog.

"Haha... Flower Fox Ferret, good job!"

The white figure was indeed the Flower Fox Ferret.

Fang Yuan was unwilling to return empty-handed, and so instructed the Flower Fox Ferret to steal some spiritual fertilizer, as what it did previously.

After all, the size, colour, and speed of the Flower Fox Ferret allowed it to escape even if it was spotted, and was the perfect candidate for the job.

And after having Fang Yuan as a buddy, it became much more efficient.

Fang Yuan retrieved the fully-filled cloth bag from the Flower Fox Ferret's neck and smiled, "Good, one more time, and we can settle the entire season's supply of Vermillion Jade Rice and spiritual tea!"

"Keke!"

The Flower Fox Ferret raised its paws, as though it was

bargaining.

"All right, I'll keep your portion of the spiritual tea!"

Fang Yuan could not help but feel embarrassed, as he felt that the Flower Fox Ferret had become much wiser and knew how to bargain! It needs to be controlled!

"Go!"

With a flick of its tail, the Flower Fox Ferret went on its way to steal more spiritual fertilizer.

As long as Fang Yuan acceded to his request, nothing else matters.

"This spiritual land... What a pity I cannot own it yet, what a pity..."

Fang Yuan gazed at the Green Peak, in his eyes a tinge of regret.

He knew that although there might be treasures within this spiritual land, the Red-eye White Birds were the owners of this spiritual land and with their existence, he could never develop in the spiritual land.

Therefore, his short-term goal could only be to enter the mountains and to retrieve the spiritual fertilizer.

"The only issue with this spiritual fertilizer is..."

Fang Yuan looked up to the cliff and saw white spots falling down. His expression changed, "Oh sh*t.....The Flower Fox Ferret and I are actually collecting faeces!"

That's right!

The white beach beneath the cliff was the place where the flock of Red-eyed White Birds went to defecate.

Those incredible, effective spiritual plant fertilizers, were, in fact, bird's droppings!

It was a speechless discovery for Fang Yuan.

Regardless, such a job with so much potential had to go on.

"Anyway, bird's droppings are a natural fertilizer, and since these are the droppings of the half-spiritual, or maybe even spiritual birds, then it is only natural that their droppings have such wonderful effects..."

Fang Yuan was used to manual labour since young and therefore didn't mind. After clearing his thoughts, he started to account for his loot.

From the Flower Fox Ferret's many trips to and fro, and thanks to the distracted Red-eyed White Birds, Fang Yuan obtained a huge amount of 'spiritual fertilizer', enough for him to harvest and sow another batch of Vermillion Jade Rice, and pluck another batch of spiritual tea.

He also took the opportunity and captured a few lone Red-eyed White Birds and ate them for a few meals, as a form of revenge for previously making a fool out of them.

The truth was that Fang Yuan wanted to take advantage of the spiritual effect of the bird meat, and together with the Flower Fox Ferret, they hunted a few Red-eyed White Birds.

Slowly, the birds learnt their lesson and rarely loitered outside the cliff. If they did, they would do it in packs, and the king bird would patrol around the area, which forced Fang Yuan to stop hunting.

In fact, when Fang Yuan first saw the king bird, who was gigantic and had a wingspan over a few meters, he was shocked.

It was definitely a spiritual bird!

Even a few of the bird leaders had the spiritual level of the king bird!

After this observation, Fang Yuan gave up hope on trying to claim the Green Peak for his own.

"Keke!"

The Flower Fox Ferret rushed back with another cloth bag full of spiritual fertilizer, and their mission was a success.

This was normal, as the swarm of Red-eyed White Birds had the intellect of an average human and therefore would not pay too much attention to their own faeces.

"It's time to leave!"

Carrying a full basket of spiritual fertilizer, Fang Yuan walked out of the fog, looked back at it, and recalled a sentence from his dream world, "I will be back!"

At this moment, Fang Yuan was not alone.

...

"Red-eyed White Birds, wait and see. One day, I will transform this whole spiritual land into my spiritual farm..."

To a person who loved farming, seeing such a good piece of land go to waste was an unforgivable mistake.

Even though he went back with their baskets full, his grudge against the birds remained.

Fang Yuan brought home a grudge and even more harvest.

The journey back was much smoother than the journey to the spiritual land. When he could finally see the secluded valley, Fang Yuan had already imagined how it would be like to have a bountiful harvest of spiritual rice and tea.

But as he approached the entrance of the valley, his expression changed, "Someone's here!"

Around the valley was a mess, with blood stains everywhere. It was evident that someone came by.

"From the marks, the person did not stay for long!"

Fang Yuan felt the blood on the leaves, looked into the valley,

placed his basket down and walked into the secluded valley.

"Come out!"

The Flower Fox Ferret sniffed the ground and pounced.

Fang Yuan stood at the entrance and calmly requested.

A moment passed but there was no movement.

Fang Yuan frowned and waved his hand. The Flower Fox Ferret jumped in and popped his head out as though it was surprised.

"Hmm?"

Fang Yuan stepped in and saw someone lying on the ground. He was pale, and there was blood on his chest. He felt very familiar.

"Zhou Wenwu from the Zhou Family? How did he end up in this state?"

He felt for Zhou Wenwu's pulse. "It's a serious injury, but even though he's passed out, his life is not in danger... Why would this small jerk have the guts to come to my place and give me more trouble?"

Fang Yuan became speechless and came to the entrance.

Previously, the Flower Fox Ferret warned him of a stranger nearby.

"Who is it?"

He walked out of the house and saw a man in black attire. He looked sinister and was around 30 to 40 years old.

"Eh? You noticed me?"

The middle-aged man was surprised, but sounded boastful, "I am Spirit Returning Sect's Elder Song's disciple, Song San, and I am under orders to kill the bastard from the Zhou Family, and if you do know..."

"Oh! That bastard is in the house, bring him away!"

Fang Yuan nodded his head calmly, and caught Song San by surprise, making him forget what he wanted to say.

This type of 'I-have-yet-to-threaten-you-but-you-have-already-cooperated' kind of feeling was a confusing one.

This person was not the average person!

Song Zhong was confused, and witnessed Zhou Wenwu being thrown out like rubbish, "I only have a simple doctor-patient relationship with this man, so take him away!"

The Zhou Family meant nothing to Fang Yuan.

He saved Old Zhou and had gotten the martial arts manual from him, and even protected Zhou Wenxin for a little while. That was already beyond what he would normally do.

It was illogical to defend Old Zhou's son and put his own life at risk.

"He's really Zhou Wenwu!"

Song San took a step forward, recognised him and seemed satisfied. He turned around, look at Fang Yuan and asked, "You're the doctor here?"

"I only know the basics of healing..."

Fang Yuan nodded his head.

"So you were the one that treated Old Zhou's poison?"

"Poison?!"

Fang Yuan grew suspicious.

He knew that Old Zhou had contracted the Drunk Lover Poison, and Old Zhou himself had realised too, but how would this man know?

Unless he was the one that poisoned Old Zhou!

"What poison? I'm not sure!"

Fang Yuan remained resolute on his stand.

'Know your limits, and know when to take a step back!'

Seeing Fang Yuan, Song San knew that if the other disciples were sent here instead, they would let him off and make friends with him.

There were not many people who dared to play along.

He was unlucky to have met Song San because he was reprimanded by his master not long ago.

Song San remained serious, and with a smirk, "Zhou Wenwu chose to look for you at his wits ends, so you must be Zhou Family's ally!"

Fang Yuan became much more serious.

"I do not want to stir trouble..."

Fang Yuan sighed, "Why do some people seem so eager to find death?"

"Whoosh!"

He became a black flash and rushed forward, his entire body pitch black, as though he was wearing a layer of iron clothing.

"Eagle Claw Iron Skin Technique?!"

Song San heard of this famous technique before and even saw Yu Qiuleng used it.

Seeing his opponents skill, it seemed like he was at [Martial Artist (3rd Gate)] or [Martial Artist (4th Gate)]. How would he be of any match to Fang Yuan of [Martial Artist (5th Gate)]?

"You deserve to die!"

Song San smirked, with his right hand clenched into a fist, focused his strength and prepared to strike.

But at this moment, Fang Yuan smiled, "You fool, you've been tricked!"

In mid-air, his technique changed, as his claws transformed to a palm, with a black circle in the middle. It struck down with extreme power, as though it was a large hammer smashing down.

[Black Sand Palm (Grade 5)]!

"You..."

Song San flustered and flew into mid-air, spitting out blood.

"It's you!"

He laid on the floor, with blood oozing from his lips, regretful.

It was as if that he realised at that moment, that this harmless young man was Song Yujie's murderer, but he could no longer bring this piece of news out.

Chapter 32: The County

"What have you guessed?"

Fang Yuan went up slowly with an apathetic face. His cold look caused Song San to feel the brink of death.

"Hold on a second...."

He shouted. "You killed Song Yujie and Song Zhong will definitely not let you go. He is crazy and he wants everyone to die together with his son.... I can help you since I know that old man...."

He spoke halfway and was horrified after coughing out a mouthful of blood.

"I will settle that old man myself. You should be on your way now!"

Fang Yuan did not know anything else which could cure the Pearl Tail Snake's Poison other than the Yama's Order.

This martial artist should also be easily poisoned even though he was highly skilled like Fang Yuan.

Not long after, Song San became a corpse with a blue-black face.

"Unfortunately.... The poison is so effective that it killed Song San before I could get more information from him.... It seems like it is not worth to give him a pill of the spiritual medicine to let him survive a little longer...."

Fang Yuan felt a little regretful after watching Song San died. He waved and said, "Flower Fox Ferret, go and patrol the area. Kill anyone who dares to come close to this area!"

"Keke!"

A bright white light flashed past and the Flower Fox Ferret was back not long after from its patrol. Its paws were clean and it shook its head.

"No one? So Song San came here on his own?"

Fang Yuan had a suspicion and sighed after looking at Song San's body. "You are lucky!"

If Song San had given up, Fang Yuan would naturally send Zhou Wenwu out and end their relations. However, Song San had the intention to interfere on his own and got himself into trouble in the end. He was indeed unlucky.

Moreover, he was unconscious and did not know Fang Yuan's attitude and performance previously.

It would then be worth saving his life.

"Song Zhong must be really crazy to get the whole Zhou family killed. Luckily, I've saved Zhou Wenwu's life to allow him to find his sect for help. Any sects who know about his situation will definitely help him in any way!"

Once a faction consolidated its power, it would never allow its own men to kill each other. Otherwise, where would the cohesiveness among the men be?

If everyone from the Zhou family had been killed and there was no leader left, Song Zhong could find a few people as scapegoats and allow himself to be not traced as the murderer.

Now with Zhou Wenwu alive as the sole witness, Song Zhong would not be able to escape when others knew about this!

Hence, in Fang Yuan's eyes, Zhou Wenwu was worth saving as he was useful.

After all, Fang Yuan killed Song Yujie and he had to kill Song Zhong so that there would be no further threats.

.....

"Father..... Ah Fu...."

In his dream, he could faintly see Song Zhong struggling to stay alive.

Zhou Wenwu shouted and woke up from his dream feeling shocked.

He was previously injured in his chest but now he felt much better.

"Yes....Father fought against the enemies desperately so that my sister and I could escape through the secret pathway. Unfortunately, we were still being chased even though he was fighting the soldiers. In the end, we split....."

He began to regain consciousness and took a look at his surroundings. "Is this place....the secluded valley?"

"You have woken up?"

Fang Yuan served a bowl of medicine and showed concern for him.

"Thank you, Master, for saving my life!"

Zhou Wenwu wanted to get up to show his gratitude but was stopped by Fang Yuan. "You are still injured. You should just stay in bed and rest.... What happened to the Zhou family?"

"The Zhou family...."

Once he mentioned this, Zhou Wenwu's eyes became teary. "From today onwards, there will be no Zhou family in Qingye City!"

"How is this possible? Are Old Zhou and Miss Zhou alright?"

Fang Yuan sounded surprised and asked, "Who is the murderer?"

"Song Zhong is definitely the mastermind of the murder!"

Zhou Wenwu bit his teeth tightly and said, "Even though the murderer had concealed himself, I had seen him with my own eyes. I shouldn't be wrong!"

"Ssss...."

Fang Yuan inhaled and asked, "How could it be?"

"That Song Zhong is a crazy man!"

Zhou Wenwu started to get up and said, "My sister and I were separated. I'm not sure whether you have seen us. When the soldiers and Song San came chasing after me, I then knew it was difficult to defeat Song Zhong...."

"I didn't see them...."

Fang Yuan shook his head and said, "Master Zhou, you are a good man. This place is very secluded and Song San probably would have been gone back...."

"I think so too!"

Zhou Wenwu couldn't believe what had happened, but when he thought about how Fang Yuan dealt with the situation, he understood what Fang Yuan meant and answered him.

"What plans do you have, Master Zhou?"

Fang Yuan cut to the chase by asking him that question.

"I will return to the sect, of course, and look for the leader for help!"

Zhou Wenwu's eyes were red. He clenched his fist and said, "If I'm alive, he will have to be dead!"

He himself knew that he couldn't fight against Song Zhong on his own and he needed help from the sect.

Furthermore, Song Zhong was the one in the wrong and he was definitely going to be punished as long as they were able to expose him!

"With your current injuries, you shouldn't move about so much. Luckily Qinghe County is just nearby. I can only prescribe enough medicine for you to find your sect but not enough to for you to regain your martial arts skills!"

Fang Yuan nodded in agreement.

"Thank you, Master, for your help!"

Zhou Wenwu was grateful towards Fang Yuan but he felt sorrowful. He was supposed to rendezvous with Zhou Wenxin but they had not met up till now. She probably had been killed.

In that case, he would be the only one left in the Zhou family.

"After my revenge, I will do anything you want to repay your kindness!"

"That will be unnecessary...."

Fang Yuan swayed his arms and glanced at Zhou Wenwu, "How about I escort you to the county since you are still injured?"

"What?"

Zhou Wenwu was dazed upon hearing that.

He also had this idea originally but didn't dare to request for it since he had troubled Fang Yuan so much already. Since Fang Yuan offered to do it, it made it seemed like he was a good man in Zhou Wenwu's eyes!

Little did he know that in Fang Yuan's eyes, Zhou Wenwu was extremely important in making sure that Song Zhong would be dead. Hence, Fang Yuan had decided to make that offer so he could make sure Zhou Wenwu reach his sect safely.

Of course, Zhou Wenwu didn't know the truth. In his eyes, Fang Yuan was kind-hearted with incredible medical skills.

.....

"Qinghe County...."

On the road, a cart moved slowly. Fang Yuan wore his hat and pondered over his thoughts silently.

In this world, the presence of the local authority was rare. For Qingye City, the families there were the ones controlling and making the calls instead of the local authorities.

The county was similar in a sense that the Spirit Returning Sect was in total control of it. The local authorities present there had no say in anything.

Rather, a portion of the high-ranking officials in the county were members of the Spirit Returning Sect.

Therefore, Fang Yuan could guess the state of the royal sovereignty of this county, which was similar to the one he had in his dream.

That was why after his whole family was killed, Zhou Wenwu did not even consider to report to the local authorities. Instead, he went to his Sect for help.

The cart was moving smoothly at a steady pace, which was helpful to the injured person lying in it.

'The Flower Fox Ferret will stay behind to guard the secluded valley. I am sufficient for this trip to the county!'

'Of course, I should not reveal my Black Sand Palm whenever possible. My Eagle Claw Iron Skin technique needs to be stronger as soon as possible!'

Fang Yuan was eager to improve his technique and he glanced at his stats window.

"Name: Fang Yuan

Essence: 2.7

Spirit: 2.6

Magic: 1.5

Age: 18

Cultivation: [Martial Arts (5th Gate)]

Techniques: [Black Sand Palm (Grade 5)], [Eagle Claw Iron Skin Technique (Grade 4)]

Skills: [Medicine (Level 2)], [Botany (Level 3)]"

"Since I have the foundations for martial arts, I am able to improve my Eagle Claw Iron Skin Technique quickly....."

Even when he was still searching for the spiritual fertiliser, he still continued to train. Moreover, he was benefitting from consuming the meat of the spiritual beast. The result was way better than when he consumed the Vermillion Jade Rice.

"My Spirit has increased by 0.1. My Iron Skin Technique has gained a new grade and it is not far from reaching the peak of the 5th Grade...."

Fang Yuan was satisfied with his progress.

When he killed Song Yujie previously, he had revealed his ability in the Black Sand Palm Technique. Hence, he would try as much as possible not to execute this technique.

On the other hand, the Eagle Claw Iron Skin Technique didn't have such a disadvantage and he could train it till he attained the 12 Golden Gates. By then he would naturally gain more attention from the others.

Fang Yuan focused on the Eagle Claw Iron Skin Technique and a few messages appeared in his mind.

"Eagle Claw Iron Skin Technique - A combination of inner and external techniques. When mastered, it would be similar to coating the entire body with iron, making it impenetrable by fire and water, as well as making the body difficult to wound. Currently at 4th Grade, this techniques strengthens the inner power of the Eagle Claw Technique!"

In the path of martial arts, before the Pain Gate is broken through, only inner power, and not inner force would be cultivated!

To Fang Yuan, this was the difference between the disorderly inner power and the rope-like inner force.

However, practising martial arts was also beneficial for one's

inner power.

He had this feeling that since his power from his Dantian got stronger, he could feel a very strong energy inside it.

If he were to succeed in the conversion of his inner power, he would advance past the threshold for the standard of an expert in martial arts in Qinghe County!

"Master....Master Fang!"

Just when Fang Yuan was about to execute and train his Eagle Claw technique, a weak voice was heard from the inside of the cart.

"How are you feeling, Master Zhou?"

Fang Yuan opened the cart's curtains and saw Zhou Wenwu's pale face.

"I can still hold it!"

Zhou Wenwu coughed a couple of times, coughing out blood in the process. "That....that old man will not let me go easily. He will surely send his men to prevent us from reaching Qinghe County!"

"So what?"

Fang Yuan laughed and said, " We have nothing to worry about if Song Zhong doesn't personally stop us!"

He had easily defeated Song San, who was a disciple of Song Zhong. This clearly showed that his skills were comparable to the skills of Song Zhong's men.

Moreover, there were many ways to get to the county. He could purposely take a different road to make it harder for Song Zhong's men to locate them.

Regardless, they could still encounter trouble in the county.

Chapter 33: Decision

"Whoosh! Whoosh!"

A common white carrier pigeon descended into a big building.

This building occupied a considerable amount of space at the corner of Qinghe County. It was obvious that someone of high importance lived here.

The passers-by that walked past this building would either be envious or keep their heads down. No one dared to step out of line.

This was the place of the local tyrant in Qinghe County, the Head of the Spirit Returning Sect!

"Kuku!"

The pigeon flew into a quiet and secluded courtyard and was received by a hand that was white like a white jade.

"Master! Urgent report from Qingye City!"

The owner of the hand removed the message from the leg of the pigeon. His face changed as he looked at the pretty lady, whose face was partially covered by a veil, by his side.

This lady was around 30 to 40 years old. She appeared to be very graceful with eyes that shone bright like stars. It was easy to imagine that she was a beauty when she was younger.

This lady was the head of the Spirit Returning Sect and Qinghe County's only Wu Zong. Her name was Shi Yutong.

She was rumoured to have brought her disciple to visit a friend far away. At this moment, however, to everyone's astonishment, she was already in the building.

Shi Yutong took a look at the message. Her brows furrowed as she spoke in a grave tone, "Song Zhong's actions are overboard!"

She knew that Song Zhong had just lost his beloved son and it

was inevitable that he would step out of line.

It would not be a problem if he killed off a few foes. However, he was overboard in killing a deacon of the sect over a suspicion.

"Master!"

A young maiden at the side of Shi Yutong said, "My father..."

"Don't worry. I have ordered my men to fetch Minister Lin from Qingye City. Soon, you will be able to meet him in the county!"

Shi Yutong smiled.

This maiden was the daughter of Minister Lin and was formally betrothed to Fang Yuan. Her name was Lin Leiyue.

Shi Yutong calmly analysed the factions within the sect, as if she wanted Lin Leiyue to quickly understand the situation, "With Song Zhong as such, Elder Yan's faction would not dare to raise the matter up. According to what I know, the Zhou Family is not totally annihilated. I just have to wait for them to bring up the matter before I uphold justice!"

"It is just that..."

Lin Leiyue appeared to be hesitant.

"Do you think that I am unreasonable?"

Shi Yutong laughed. She glanced at Leiyue as if she knew what she was thinking.

"Leiyue would not dare to think so!"

Lin Leiyue apologized with a bow.

"This is what I have to teach you today. Balance!"

Shi Yutong's tone grew serious, "As the Sect Head, it is important to understand and balance the power and authority of those beneath you! Previously, Elder Yan's faction has many who are untamed. We can use the current situation and kill two birds with one stone. We will use force to overcome force and help Elder Han.

By doing so, I will act as a mediator and hold the power to decide their fate. This is of paramount importance. Do you understand what I am talking about?"

"What master is saying that we should not readily take sides and instead act as a mediator?"

Lin Leiyue blinked her eyes.

"Not bad!"

Shi Yutong nodded her head, "Silly girl, you are indeed witty. You need to understand that in a powerful organization, there will be fights between the factions. As the Head, you will need to achieve balance and equilibrium, forcing the factions to rely on us. By doing so, it will be easy to assume command of them..."

If Leiyue was just an ordinary disciple, Shi Yutong would not say such words to her. However, Shi Yutong was training Leiyue to become the next Sect Head and as such, kept nothing from her.

"Thank you master for your pointer!"

Lin Leiyue understood very clearly that, to her master, the Zhou Family was nothing. It would just be luck that brought them to the county. If they could not reach the county, it would just mean that they were unlucky.

Since Shi Yutong had already decided to act, Song Zhong would not come to a good end.

As the Wuzong of the Spirit Returning Sect, Shi Yutong naturally had the grandeur and the confidence.

"Hehe... It is funny that that Song Zhong's son, Song Yujie, still wanted to ask for your hand in marriage? That is crossing the line and being too greedy...."

Shi Yutong glanced at Lin Leiyue and poked fun at her, "Our Yue'Er is such an outstanding beauty, how many guys are going to fall in love with you in the future?"

"Master!"

Lin Leiyue flushed and stomped her foot, "Even you are making fun of me!"

"You always understand where your priorities lie. I am not worried about you!"

Shi Yutong said solemnly yet gently.

Lin Leiyue trained with her in a high-level inner technique which required pure yin. She had many suitors within and outside the sect. However, these people only did so to increase their social status. Both the master and disciple knew the reason behind so.

"The world is vast! What you saw previously was only the tip of an iceberg..."

Shi Yutong said solemnly, "Leiyue, you were born with opened meridians which, together with your Spiritual Moon Body, makes you best suited for my 'Bright Moon Formula'. You have the potential to greatly surpass me and eventually reached the true Cultivation World..."

"The true...Cultivation World!"

Lin Leiyue muttered. Her eyes were yearning.

Her master's friend, who was an alchemy master, whom they visited opened her eyes to the world.

The alchemy masters, which were rumoured to be even rarer than the spiritual knights and the magical knights, possessed a set of skills where they were able to use their alchemy flames within their bodies, combined with spiritual ingredients to form spiritual pills that were able to work all kinds of wonders.

These spiritual pills did not have harmful side-effects and its effects were miraculous, as such, each type of pills was highly sought after by martial artists who were willing to fight for them.

For example, the 'Frozen Moon Pill' that her master got for her,

was compatible with her body and allowed her to improve her martial arts skills by leaps and bounds. It would also increase the chance of success for her in the future when she attempted to break through the 3 Perilous Gates!

Before she witnessed it with her own eyes, Lin Leiyue would never imagine such a thing actually existed!

It was only natural that the alchemy masters were powerful members of the society where they were well-received. No one dared to offend them given their skills.

For example, the alchemy master that she visited had a Wu Zong that acted as a bodyguard. If it was not for the friendship that the alchemy master had with Shi Yutong, the alchemy master would not have stepped in to help Lin Leiyue.

This alchemy master was only a small part of the higher-levelled cultivation world!

Lin Leiyue was overwhelmed by her emotions when she thought of these.

Even though she was a lady, she dreamt to reach the pinnacle.

"I will not disappoint my master!"

Lin Leiyue bowed with firm resolution.

"Haha...That's good!"

Shi Yutong helped her up with both hands, and said, "Now, you just have to train hard. With the aid of the pill, you would be able to swiftly overcome the Pain Gate and increase your inner power. After that, I will make you a the successor of the sect. No one will dare to say a thing!"

'Brother Fang...'

Lin Leiyue thought of the ordinary youth that lived in the secluded valley when she heard this.

At that time, her master cancelled the wedding without

understanding the details, and Lin Leiyue was in no position to resist.

If she was given another chance, would she have challenged the decision now that she had made up her mind?

Lin Leiyue's heart was in a mess. This was the first time she was perplexed...

...

"We have reached Qinghe County!"

Not far away, a carriage pulled by an ox drew closer. Fang Yuan gazed out at the city wall and smiled.

This was the first time that he had come to a big city and as such, he was excited.

"Cough cough..."

Zhou Wenwu insisted on accompanying Fang Yuan despite his illness. His face was an unnatural shade of red. "Once we reach the territory of the sect, not even Song Zhong would be able to do a thing. However, he would certainly arrange for brutes to stop me at the city gate..."

There were many routes along the way. As long as they were willing to detour, it was easy to avoid being blocked unless Song Zhong was the head of the Spirit Returning Sect.

However, if he had guessed that Zhou Wenwu was making his way to Qinghe County, it would be easy to just wait for him there.

"Brother Fang, do you have any idea?"

Zhou Wenwu looked expectedly at Fang Yuan.

Fang Yuan would not let anyone call him 'Master' on the journey as it would bring attention to himself.

Furthermore, his age was similar to Zhou Wenwu and after a few small talks, the two became closer and used it as an opportunity to

change the way they addressed each other.

"I do not have a plan. However, I have a stupid idea!"

Fang Yuan's lips curled into a smile, "We just choose a door and barge in. It is that simple!"

"I see..."

Zhou Wenwu would never imagine that Fang Yuan's idea was to use simple brute force to barge in.

"This problem was caused by Song Zhong himself. Unless his faction would make a grave error and send people to stop us?"

Fang Yuan spread his arms, "This county has four gates, and as long as we are not too unlucky, we have low chance of meeting him unless he can split his body..."

He would be able to deal with the road blockers single-handedly if they were Song Zhong's disciples.

"What if..."

Zhou Wenwu was hesitant. He did not want to jeopardise the revenge now that it was within his grasp.

"If we really clash with Song Zhong, we can only duel with him. The members of the Spirit Returning Sect would come if there was a big commotion right?"

Fang Yuan glanced at Zhou Wenwu.

If they did not even know how to make use of such a wonderful opportunity, Song Zhong would be able to exterminate Zhou Tong's faction.

"That's right! We shall do as you say!"

Zhou Wenwu gritted his teeth.

He had nothing to be afraid of if an outsider like Fang Yuan would dare to do such a thing.

Little did he know that Fang Yuan dared to do so due to the fact

that he was highly skilled in martial arts.

In the event that they met Song Zhong, he just had to use Zhou Wenwu as a shield and escape.

Song Zhong had no idea that he was the killer and would not chase him like a mad dog.

Furthermore, if Zhou Wenwu was killed by Song Zhong in front of everybody, it would further condemn Song Zhong!

"It is best for an outsider not to meddle in a battle between factions.....If I take part in and did not handle the conflict well enough, I would likely be attacked by both sides or be used by them as a pawn!"

Having the experience from another world, Fang Yuan's heart was clear like a mirror, "Whatever the case, once this is done, I must quickly escape and leave this place as far as possible."

Chapter 34: Four Seas Court

"Please halt, this is a routine check!"

West Gate, Qinghe County.

Numerous martial artists clad in Spirit Returning Sect's robes were scrutinizing the many who were passing by the gate, and they paid special attention to the large carts passing by. Bribery did not work, and they create chaos in the vicinity.

An ox carriage slowly passed by, and as Zhou Wenwu observed the scene, he became increasingly nervous.

He thought that he could not hide from the strict checks, and would be forced to fight his way out.

Luckily for him, he realised that Song Zhong was not around, and heaved a sigh of relief.

By fearing the Spirit Returning Sect's reputation, the people entering the county did not dare to disobey. Many women were pulled out from their carriages, embarrassed. Their bodyguards were agitated.

Even though the checks were slow, the queue was still moving, and not long after, it was Fang Yuan's turn.

"Is it your wife or your daughter in the cart? Get her out and let me see!"

A perverted Sect member came forward and prepared to open the curtains.

"Keke..."

Fang Yuan looked into the cart, as though the whole thing was a joke.

"What are you laughing at?"

He could sense that the Sect member was already wielding a

knife.

"You are with Song Zhong? You don't even know your own death, what an idiot!"

Fang Yuan shook his head, the fingers on his right hand opened and quick as a lightning, he struck.

"Kacha! Crack!"

A distinct sound followed as the Sect member held onto his forearm, and with agony written on his face, he fell to the ground.

"Eagle Claw Technique?"

The few Spirit Returning Sect members in the vicinity looked at each other, and under the command of a young man clad in a green robe, they rushed forward, "Together!"

"Ping!"

Fang Yuan took a deep breath and his skin starting to turn greenish-black. He did not run but took a step forward to counter-attack.

After avoiding the sword, he felt no pain when fists and kicks landed on his body, and even so for blunt weapons, the most he felt was a slight itch.

On the contrary, his claws struck out and every Sect member fell to the ground, wailing in pain.

This scene created even more chaos at the gates, and reinforcements came.

"Zhou Wenwu, now it's your time to perform!"

Fang Yuan scoffed, spun around, headed into the city and disappeared.

"I am the son of Spirit Returning Sect's deacon, Zhou Tong!"

Zhou Wenwu stood out and raised an iron token. "With the Sect's token as proof, I am here to report Elder Song, for killing my entire

family of 73! May the Sect uphold justice for me!"

His last few words were loud and could be heard by all, and the Sect members changed their expression after hearing him.

Even though Song Zhong might be powerful, he could not do whatever he wanted in Qinghe County, and now that Zhou Wenwu said his piece, the Sect would definitely do something.

"This is really Zhou Wenwu!"

Not long after, a group of Sect members hurriedly brought an old man to the gate, looked at Zhou Wenwu and comforted him, "Do not worry, for the Spirit Returning Sect will not let his murderer off the hook!"

He stared at Song Zhong's followers who were laid on the ground and waved his hand. "Capture them!"

Many disciples rushed forward and used thick ropes to tie them up.

"Uncle Xue, I hope you will uphold justice for me!"

Zhou Wenwu let his emotions run wild, as tears welled up in his eyes.

However, the truth was that he felt vengeful deep within him.

The Sect would have known what had actually happened at Qingye City. All other elders had condoned Song Zhong's followers to wreck havoc, but all of them did nothing to blown things out of proportion, and therefore pressure the Sect Master.

However, the Sect Master remained calm despite the chaos.

It was as though the entire Sect swallowed her!

"Oh, where is the warrior that escorted you?"

Elder Xue felt Zhou Wenwu's pulse and appeared curious.

"Brother Fang? I think he left by himself..."

Zhou Wenwu knew that Fang Yuan did not want to get involved

in the situation and so he said, "Where is the Sect Master? I want to see her right away!"

"This of course, but before that, may I introduce you to the area's Elder, Elder Han! He has waited for you for quite a while already!"

Elder Xue grabbed Zhou Wenwu's arm, and with his strength, Zhou Wenwu had no chance of escaping, even if he wasn't injured.

"Alright!"

Zhou Wenwu agreed, albeit unwillingly.

...

Within the crowd, Fang Yuan witnessed the scene and dispersed with the crowd.

"Indeed.....The Spirit Returning Sect's internal conflicts are at its peak now, and Zhou Wenwu might be made use of by the elders!"

He did not want things to end up this way, and therefore created the chaos to attract attention, and took his leave.

Even Zhou Wenwu, their descendent had such treatment. What would he as an outsider receive?

"This was, however, Song Zhong's fault, and if he was dealt with directly, it could save me a lot of trouble..."

At a dark corner, Fang Yuan changed his appearance and walked down the streets of the county without fear.

The chaos at the gate did not last long, and within the city, not many knew about it, and therefore business remained as usual.

Compared to Qingye City, there were many more skilled martial artists, and even the women here were equipped with knives, which caught Fang Yuan's attention.

Of course, there were those delicate ladies who never left their house, but if all women picked up martial arts, there would

definitely be a handful that would have the potential for martial arts.

A prime example would be the Wu Zong martial artist from the Spirit Returning Sect, a lady well-known in Qinghe County.

"This visit to the county was primarily to send this ticking time-bomb, Zhou Wenwu here, as well as to bring back more spiritual plants and more information regarding the spiritual land..."

It was rare for Fang Yuan to leave the secluded valley, and now that he arrived at the county, he did not want to leave empty-handed.

He also wanted to find out what happened to Song Zhong.

"It is hard to obtain spiritual plants, and even harder to find out the secrets of the spiritual land, but there must be someone who knows about it..."

He scanned his surroundings, and saw a large building and a street market, with many people around, as though business was blooming.

"Four Seas Court?"

Fang Yuan mumbled to himself before entering the doorway.

"What would you like, young master?"

The moment he took a step in, a waiter approached Fang Yuan with a smile and did not look down on Fang Yuan because of his clothing.

"I am not from this place. What do you usually sell here?"

Fang Yuan examined the place and was filled with curiosity.

"Master, you have a good taste! Here at Four Seas Court, we are the biggest retailer in Qinghe County! From provisions to martial artist manuals and weapons, there's nothing we don't sell, and nothing we don't buy!"

The waiter proudly answered him.

"Oh?!"

Fang Yuan raised his eyebrows and knew that the waiter was not lying. The Four Seas Court was likely to have official backing, or they might even belong to the Spirit Returning Sect!

Otherwise, who other than the Spirit Returning Sect's own people, would dare to say such big words?

"Are you sure you sell all sorts of things?"

"Master, you must be kidding. There are so many types of treasure out there in the world, and if you are talking about the treasures in the legends, then we really don't have it, but within Qinghe County, if we don't have it, then nowhere else would have it!"

The waiter smiled and rebutted.

"That's true..."

Fang Yuan listened and had slight hopes. "I want to buy some spiritual plants, do you sell them here?"

"Spiritual plants?"

The waiter scoffed, "This stuff ain't cheap!"

"Mmm?"

Fang Yuan was surprised, "You really do have it here?"

Within Spirit Returning Sect, there seemed to be a small piece of spiritual land specially used to cultivate spiritual plants. Therefore, if some spiritual plants did get traded here it would not be surprising.

After all, Minister Lin did get his hands on a bottle of Vermillion Jade Rice, so this Four Seas Court should not disappoint him.

"Does master really want to buy spiritual plants?"

There was suspicion all over the waiter's face.

"Don't worry, are you afraid that I might not be able to afford it?"

Fang Yuan looked at him, smiled, and whipped out a piece of golden leaf. "Bring me there!"

For this journey, Fang Yuan brought out all the valuables he had within the valley, in case of emergencies. After all, buying spiritual plants and information on spiritual lands would require him to fork out a large sum of money.

"Alright!"

The waiter's eyes glittered. "Master, this way please!"

Within the Four Seas Court, there were many compartments, and after passing through a curtain, there was no more noise from the outside world.

"Room A13!"

The waiter brought Fang Yuan to a big room, took a bow and left.

Not long after, two young ladies appeared, invited Fang Yuan to take a seat and prepared tea and fruits.

"This level of service is a whole new level?"

Fang Yuan found it amusing. At this point, he saw an old man entered the room, looking like a minister. He greeted Fang Yuan and asked, "I am Old Qian, manager of Four Seas Court. Are you looking for spiritual plants?"

"Indeed, what do we have here? We can discuss the price!"

Fang Yuan waved his hand and appeared rich.

On the contrary, he had the jitters as he wasn't sure if he had enough valuables to exchange for the spiritual plants.

"Spiritual plants are after all not a rare item, and the Court has sold many of it. But there are only a few who managed to cultivate them, and many rich families have become poor because of this. Young master, you must consider carefully!"

Old Qian seemed to be giving advice. "However, only spiritual lands can cultivate spiritual plants in large scale, and in the entire Qinghe County, the only spiritual land lies within Spirit Returning Sect, and so the others..."

He shook his head, and his expression showed it all.

"But if one spends time and money, and puts in all the effort to take care of it, then there might be a slight chance that it would germinate. Otherwise, how did the rare spiritual plants appear in the wild?"

Fang Yuan, an expert in botany, had personal experience in growing spiritual plants, and with the experience, he could reply without hesitation.

Chapter 35: Stalking

"Oh? So you are an expert in botany! Pardon my disrespectfulness!"

Old Qian look surprised and waved his hands. "Since both of us are professionals in botany, I will not be explaining further. We only sell two types of spiritual plants. One is the Vermillion Jade Rice and the other is the Emerald Grass. Which type do you want? How about the Vermillion Jade Rice? However, you cannot buy that in bulk as the stock is limited...."

In fact, the majority would choose the Vermillion Jade Rice when they came here to purchase the spiritual plants.

After all, even if the rice stalk was not fully grown, it could still be eaten directly to boost one's elemental energy.

Such trickery when doing business was how the Four Seas Court earn money.

However, Fang Yuan wasn't interested in the Vermillion Jade Rice as he had sufficient supply of it back at his place.

"What effect does the Emerald Grass have?"

He immediately asked.

"Hmm? You don't want the Vermillion Jade Rice?"

Old Qian was surprised and answered, "Both the Emerald Grass and the Vermillion Jade Rice are spiritual plants of the lowest grade. However, many herbivorous spiritual beasts enjoy eating these plants and would, in turn, improve the quality of the soil..."

In fact, many who came here to purchase often traded for the Vermillion Jade Rice in large scales. In fact, Old Qian would be able to earn quite an amount, even though the customers already knew the source of the products.

"Then I shall have some of the Emerald Grass!"

Even though he wasn't totally satisfied, Fang Yuan was not prepared to give up on the Emerald Grass.

He began to imagine the Flower Fox Ferret eating the Emerald Grass in his mind and started to laugh at himself.

"What? You want the Emerald Grass and not the spiritual rice?"

Qian Fusheng was surprised but did not reveal it. "Every Emerald Grass seed is worth 1 gold tael. If you want 50 seeds at one go, there will be a discount!"

"This price...."

Fang Yuan was overwhelmed by the price and for once, he felt like a poor man.

'The prices of the spiritual plants are controlled by the rich. I am not rich and the price is definitely too overwhelming for me....'

He sighed while footing the bill. 'Even though the Emerald Grass and the Vermillion Jade Rice are considered the lowest grade among other spiritual things, the purchase would still attract a lot of attention. Maybe I should be more discreet next time....'

Because of this, he refused to bring any spiritual things to trade with.

A few dozen gold taels were unable to create a deep impression on the prosperous Four Seas Courts. But what if it was 1000 or 10,000 gold taels?

There was no absolute fairness in this world. There were only prices which you can or cannot afford!

"Great, please keep the seeds of the Emerald Grass well!"

After the payment, Qian Fusheng quickly brought out a Red Sandalwood wooden box. The handicraft of the wooden box was delicate and there was a fragrance coming out from it, clearly showing that it was specially made.

"The seeds of the Emerald Grass do not go well with metals.

Please remember not to bring the seeds close to any kind of metallic objects...."

Qian Fusheng reminded Fang Yuan and opened the wooden box. The box contained the green seeds of the Emerald Grass, which had a jade green colour.

"Very well!"

Fang Yuan kept the box safely. Before he left, he enquired, "Is there any other spiritual land in the whole of Qinghe County? I'm personally interested in the places where these spiritual things are grown. Maybe you would know where I can find them?"

"This...."

Qian Fusheng's face changed and immediately shook his head. "Spiritual land is naturally created and it depends on one's luck to find it. I do not know the mystery behind of the origin of the spiritual lands!"

"I see!"

Fang Yuan exited the building. "I shall take my leave!"

After seeing him leave, Qian Fusheng paced a few steps and felt uneasy. "Little San!"

"Yes, shopkeeper!"

Inside the room, a painted wall automatically moved back and revealed a pathway. A person then came out from it.

"Report this to the Sect!"

Qian Fusheng sighed.

"It was just a small purchase of the spiritual grass. Why is there a need to report?"

Little San was a little surprised by Qian Fusheng's order.

"Buying a few seeds of the Emerald Grass was nothing. However, that customer even asked about the whereabouts of spiritual lands,

making him suspicious. Send a person now to follow him!"

"Shopkeeper, you are indeed vigilant!"

At that moment, another person came out from the secret pathway. He was dressed in green and was a lean young master. He wore a Feline Eye Emerald on his head and his skin was glowing.

He waved a foldable fan around. "It is so boring in the Sect as there is nothing big happening there. It is still more interesting outside. Even a small purchase like this could be so interesting."

"You are here, Master Qing!"

Qian Fusheng and Little San bowed and were humbled to see him.

"I will personally follow this guy. You both should continue whatever you are doing!"

Master Qing looked in the direction Fang Yuan went and gave a mischievous look.

"Yes, Master!"

Qian Fusheng and Little San looked at each other, both looking helpless.

.....

"Hmm?"

After exiting the Four Seas Court, Fang Yuan went past a few shops and frowned.

The combination of his two techniques in martial arts allowed his inner power to be very powerful for a [Martial Artist (5th Gate)]. Additionally, he had a higher than average magical energy and therefore he could sense someone stalking him.

"Someone is following me? Could it be that the person wants to pick up a fight just over a few seeds of the Emerald Grass? Impossible!"

He realised his guess was wrong and found out the reason why. "Looks like it was a taboo for me to find out the whereabouts of the spiritual land..... After all, only the Spirit Returning Sect has control over the only spiritual land in Qinghe County....."

Even though his plan was well thought-out, Fang Yuan had lived in the mountains for so long and was therefore careless in handling the situation.

"How can the Four Seas Court afford to send a [Martial Artist (4th or 5th Gate)] just to stalk me?"

Such a skilled martial artist was not the common type, which surprised Fang Yuan.

At that moment, he swiftly turned into a small alley and disappeared.

"Hmm?"

Not long after, Master Qing also reached the alley. "Did he realise that I was stalking him?"

Master Qing was not afraid and decided to go after Fang Yuan instead of retreating.

The alley was short and led to a dead end.

"Thief, watch my claw!"

"Whiz!"

His clothing was torn into pieces.

Fang Yuan was ready to attack anyone who had ill intentions against him.

"Haha..... What an idiot! Who would reveal their position when ambushing?"

Master Qing laughed and folded his fan. Without looking back, he struck his foot backwards. "Flying Swallow Piercing Strike!"

The normal fan was comparable to a sharp sword when in Master

Qing's hands. The fan pierced towards the black shadow and rustled through the air.

"Chi!"

The fan easily struck into the black shadow, but it was at this moment where Master Qing felt something was wrong.

"Oh no!"

He subconsciously retreated and defended himself with his fan.

The first wrong step snowballed into subsequent errors.

Missing his first move caused him to be at a disadvantage!

"Chi!"

Suddenly, the opponent's intense Eagle Claw appeared right in front of him.

"Good!"

Master Qing was excited as he witnessed this Eagle Claw Technique. He retreated a few steps and distanced himself away from Fang Yuan. "Great Eagle Claw Technique! Compared to Yu Qiuleng's, yours is only slightly inferior. Who is your master?"

With such skilful martial arts, he must have been taught by someone well-known.

"You have only attained 4th Grade of Eagle Claw Iron Skin Technique? Looks like your skills are still shallow. I am a 5th Gate Martial Artist!

Master Qing proudly announced his skill.

"What an idiot!"

Fang Yuan looked into his eyes and felt sorry for him.

Such a person who would reveal his own cultivation level to his enemy was either extremely confident or a fool.

Unfortunately for Master Qing, he belonged to the latter!

"It would be slightly difficult to defeat a [Martial Artist (5th Gate)] executing the Black Sand Palm, but that is just a mere obstacle to me!"

Fang Yuan looked at the proficiency points of his Eagle Claw Iron Skin Technique and exclaimed. Executing the Eagle Claw Iron Skin Technique, his hands started striking out into space like a pair of claws.

"Hold on a second!"

Master Qing was anxiously trying to understand the situation. "This must be a misunderstanding!"

He only wanted to stalk and spy on Fang Yuan, so how did it become a fight to the death for both of them?

Also, he did not expect the person in front of him to be so hard to get along and violent.

'Luckily for me.....my inner power is far greater than his. He is using too much of his inner power to attack and will not last long. Once he has exhausted his strength, I will be able to.....'

Master Qing thought for a moment and was overwhelmed by Fang Yuan's quick and incessant claws, which suddenly increased by folds!

"[Eagle Claw Iron Skin Technique (Grade 5)]! How is that even possible?"

When martial artists fight, a slight difference between the skills of the two would have a great impact on the outcome. How would it be possible for one to strengthen his power out of a sudden?

Master Qing was shocked and the Eagle Claw Iron Skin Technique broke through his defences. His body flew up high into the air and knocked onto a wall.

"You....."

His became pale and he spat out a mouthful of blood. "You can't

kill me...."

"Why?"

Fang Yuan went forward and hit away his crown, which revealed a long hair. "Just because you are a....woman?"

"You found out?"

Master Qing screamed and her voice became crisp and high-pitched.

"Only the blind will not be able to see through such lousy make-up!"

Fang Yuan was speechless. "Who are you? Why are you stalking me? How are you related to the Four Seas Court?"

"Humph!"

He did not know why she could remain silent and unafraid after her real identity had been discovered.

"Oh?"

Fang Yuan popped his knuckles and snickered. "Lady, you better answer me now or else....don't think that I won't dare to hit a lady!"

She became afraid and started tearing after hearing Fang Yuan's threat.

Chapter 36: Robbery

'You are quite skilful in martial arts but you are mentally weak, like a flower in a greenhouse, a delicate lady...'

'You have ties with Four Seas Court, and the Court can get their hands on large quantities of spiritual plants, so you must be somebody...'

Fang Yuan was a smart person, and his chain of thoughts brought him to a conclusion. "Spirit Returning Sect?"

This lady was highly skilled and was on par with Song Yujie, and was therefore obvious that she was a skilled disciple of the Spirit Returning Sect.

If he killed her, he would likely get himself more enemies.

But of course, she only had the intention to stalk him, and therefore didn't deserve to die.

"What do you want! Don't come near me!"

Young Qing looked at Fang Yuan, feeling uneasy. She thought about the many stories of people being raped throughout the martial arts world and was scared out of her wits. "If you touch me... I will..."

"Don't you dare mention any backings that you might have, otherwise, I might just kill you!"

Fang Yuan stuck his index finger out and flicked the skin of this young master. At this moment, the young master held her breath and stopped crying.

"That's right, much better!"

He patted her cheeks.

'This lady's skin is perfect and smooth as silk, comparable to the fur of the Flower Fox Ferret.....Pui... What am I even thinking?'

Fang Yuan shook his head violently, and in a deep voice said, "After stalking me, are you prepared to compensate me?"

"Compensate...?"

The green master was lost.

This pervert shouldn't be thinking of doing any unruly actions, right? Why did he change so quickly?

After panicking for a while, she calmed down and tried to make sense of things. 'Could it be that I am not attractive enough... And that even this pervert don't even want me!?'

She looked at Fang Yuan and felt that his eyes could kill someone just by staring.

"What are you staring at? Unless you want your body to be searched?"

Fang Yuan judged Master Qing, and even though she was not as skilful in martial arts, her figure was not bad.

And by not having an Adam's apple at her throat, she gave away her gender.

"No! No!"

Master Qing was anxious and almost sustained an internal injury. "Whatever you want... I... I will give you!"

"I don't want any martial arts manual!"

He recalled the incomplete 'Spirit Returning Heart Manual' which he looted from Song Yujie and thus felt that way. He held onto the object which Master Qing surrendered.

He opened the shell-shaped box, saw its bright-red interior and became speechless.

"This is the best Purple Scent Token in the county, worth 10 pieces of taels!" Master Qing replied weakly.

"You rich people sure know how to play a fool!"

Fang Yuan felt a little speechless, and when he knew that the lady was rich, the thought of kidnapping her arose.

However, he was aware that her backing would not be any less influential compared to Song Yujie's.

This time although she lost, losing a little money would mean nothing, but letting her know about the dangers of the martial arts world would be the best lesson for her.

If he indeed took the martial arts manual, or even kidnapped and blackmailed this green master, it would escalate the situation. The county might even close its gates to do a county-wide search.

He knew that he could not deal with all those by himself.

"Keke..... Young Qing, you're quite rich eh?"

Fang Yuan would be satisfied even if he was able to get a small fortune.

"Qinghe Bank banknote, worth a 100 pieces of tael! And some loose change of 20 to 30 fragments of silver, and this jade bangle, and this hairpin, and this Emerald Feline Eye... Mmm, good deal, good deal!"

Fang Yuan was used to being thrifty. He took the Feline Eye Emerald from her and smiled sheepishly to himself.

In his eyes, Young Qing was his saviour.

With this lady selflessly giving away her treasures, it quickly covered the cost of the spiritual plant he bought and even earned a little more.

"You... You.....Boohoo..."

Tears welled up in Young Qing's eyes. The Golden Ticket was her hidden savings! She had just deposited it in the bank today but had to give up the ticket now.

She was lucky not to have tried threatening Fang Yuan.

"I know, you would definitely find someone to take revenge! As long as it's not a senior, I'll accept the challenge!"

Fang Yuan tilted his chin and appeared boastful. "Among our age group, I, Young Martial God Wu Ming, is not scared of anyone!"

"Young Martial God Wu Ming!"

Young Qing repeated these few words to herself, as though she wanted to remember them for life.

"Mmm, get lost, and remember that I live at the 'Ends of the World', and will welcome you anytime!"

Fang Yuan kept the items, turned around and left.

After acting, he ran for his life! how exciting!

Of course, his name was not Wu Ming, and as for living at the 'Ends of the World', it was the name of the largest motel he saw on his way here.

Poor Young Qing was being lied to, and unaware. "Young Martial God Wu Ming! Ends of the World! You remember this, I will get my seniors within the Sect to avenge for me!"

...

"An announcement from the Spirit Returning Sect: From investigations on the alleged Elder Song, he had killed the innocent and harmed fellow Sect members. It was long since a person became mad from mourning, and after discussion among the Elders, the unanimous decision is to expel him from the Sect and put him on the list of wanted criminals. Anyone who captures this thief will get a reward of one thousand taels, a martial artist manual, or a piece of Gui Yuan Order!"

Time flew by and a few days passed. A crowd formed at the gate of the county, reading the newly posted announcement from the Sect, all confused.

"Song Zhong, Elder Song? He's a martial artist of 7th Gate! How

did he end up in this state?"

"I've heard that news that his son passed away, and that drove him crazy!"

"He's the one who created chaos and destroyed the Kou Village!"

"Hehe... Do you think the Sect would even bother if it was only a few outsiders who were killed?"

Within the discussion, a person claiming to have insider information laughed. "The only thing that will condemn him for life, is that he took the lives of a fellow sect member's family, the Zhou Family!"

"Zhou Family? Zhou Family from Qingye City? ..."

"That's right, I previously even saw the Zhou Family's young master stepping up to file the appeal!"

"And Song Zhong managed to escape?"

"This is their own internal affairs, otherwise why do you think they are recruiting help?"

"No matter what, here's our chance!"

...

As the word spread, many members of the martial arts world were enticed by the reward of capturing Song Zhong.

Taels and martial arts manual may not mean much, but the Gui Yuan Order was no small reward. Whoever held this order would gain the respect of anyone from the Spirit Returning Sect like an honoured guest, and could even exchange the order for a favour from the sect.

In theory, they would accede to any request that was possible!

"Song Zhong... Gui Yuan Order?"

Outside the city, in a farm shed, Fang Yuan stopped his training as soon as he heard the news.

The city was too dangerous, and hard to escape if he got into any trouble. He could only escape if he had extreme Lightness Skill, otherwise, he would without a doubt be captured. Therefore, he left the city and took shelter from a farmer.

He did not use much money; just a few taels were enough to satisfy the family and convince them to let him stay.

He took a quick look at his stats window:

"Name: Fang Yuan

Essence: 2.7

Spirit: 2.6

Magic: 1.5

Age: 18

Cultivation: [Martial Artist (5th Gate)]

Technique: [Black Sand Palm (Level 5)], [Eagle Claw Iron Skin Technique (Level 5)]

Skill: [Medicine (Grade 2)], [Botany (Grade 3)]"

"I was all along a [Martial Artist (5th Gate)], and the progress of Eagle Claw Iron Skin Technique towards Grade 5 was quick. I have finally attained it..."

After grasping the basics, mastering other techniques would be simple, and even the standards to meet were lowered in the progress bar, so naturally, he would have a rapid progression.

He used this feature to extort Young Qing a few days ago.

After all, the Pain Gate was one of the 3 Perilous Gates, and if there was an accident, one would get injured with no hope of recovery. Therefore, Fang Yuan had no choice but to take it seriously.

"Initially, I thought that I could return home after the issue was settled, and focus on training. Who would've thought that the

incompetent Spirit Returning Sect could not contain Song Zhong, and even had to recruit the help of the public to capture him?"

Fang Yuan did not understand.

Of course, he didn't know that the internal strife within Spirit Returning Sect has escalated out of control.

The Sect Head, Shi Yutong was not resolute, and the two clans under the leadership of the elders, Elder Yan and Elder Han, were in conflict, which resulted in such an outcome.

The Sect Head only wanted peace and have positive control over the entire situation, and as for Song Zhong, she did not care if he was dead or alive.

Of course, Fang Yuan didn't know so much, but he knew one thing!

He would only find peace if Song Zhong was killed!

Although he took steps to cover his traces, he still wasn't sure if someone could track him down. By then, if the martial artist in the 3 Perilous Gate ordered for his death, he could never escape from him.

"I need to take this opportunity to get rid of him, while the situation allows!"

Fang Yuan had decided, wore his clothing, ran out and soon disappeared.

...

It was a piece of cake to obtain information about Song Zhong.

The entire county was looking for him.

It was heard that this person killed with no regard to his own life, killed his way out of the Sect, and escaped to take refuge within the large green mountains.

This mountain was a part of the mountainous ridge of Clear

Spirit Mountains, and after shutting down the major arterial routes within the mountain, patrolling was conducted. Many martial artists brought along their dry rations and followed, hoping that sooner or later, he would be captured.

"Oh! It's so crowded?"

Outside of the mountains, Fang Yuan looked up, and saw the sun burning down brilliantly, and looked around and the numerous martial artists around. He was speechless. "I shouldn't be too hasty. I just need to follow the crowd and witness Song Zhong's death!"

Although the large green mountain was an arterial peak, it was also rather large. The mountain was covered in grass and trees, and to find a highly skilled martial artist hiding within was no easy feat.

But Fang Yuan wasn't rushed. He slowly scanned the vicinity, at the same time made a few new martial artists friends and started sharing their experiences.

One day, at noontime, he was sleeping on a large piece of rock. Suddenly, he heard a delicate voice. "Senior, it's him!"

The delicate voice sounded familiar.

He turned his head to the source of the sound and was shocked.

Chapter 37: Peeping

In the depths of the forest, shadows flickered, and a few human figures appeared.

The first to step forward was Young Qing, who had exhausted all her valuables in front of Fang Yuan. She wore a green dress and carried a sword at her waist. She looked even more stunning than she did the other day, but her piercing voice did much to mar her beauty.

There were other young men and women around her, and Fang Yuan recognised one of the ladies in a yellow dress.

It was more than just recognition. He was familiar with her, and they even had a marriage agreement previously!

"Sister Leiyue!"

Young Qing tugged Lin Leiyue's sleeves and said, "That's him... he's the evil person who robbed me! You have to avenge me!"

"How dare you steal from our Junior Qing!"

Lin Leiyue gazed at Fang Yuan, stunned. The people with her had already unsheathed their swords and were surrounding Fang Yuan menacingly.

This was because Young Qing had looked them up before, and they had searched the whole Qingye County and the Four Seas Court for this 'Young Martial God Wu Ming' to no avail. Of course they were angry.

"Wait!"

Lin Leiyue suddenly held up a hand, and slowly stepped forward. She was unsure and looked at Fang Yuan with hesitation.

"You are...Brother Fang?"

"Hehe..."

Fang Yuan rubbed his nose and said, "To think that you still remember me!"

He was also surprised to see that the young lass in his memory had gone through a complete makeover. She now had the airs of a big sister.

"Wait!"

Young Qing looked at Lin Leiyue, then at Fang Yuan. She was confused.

"Isn't Wu his surname? How did it become Fang?"

"Qing!"

Lin Leiyue wiped her brow embarrassedly and asked, "Are you really sure that it's this person?"

"That's right, I'll recognise him even if he was reduced to ashes. Big Sister, you know him?"

Young Qing's heart began to beat faster.

After all, it was against the rules of the martial world to tail Fang Yuan in the first place.

"Fang Yuan? Fang Yuan! I remember! Isn't he the person you were once betrothed to?"

One of the onlooking young disciples, most probably one of Lin Leiyue's many admirers, glared at Fang Yuan with a look that could kill.

"So it's him!"

Immediately, Fang Yuan became aware that all the males present hated on him more than ever. He was beleaguered by many pairs of flashing eyes that seemed to will him into burning up in flames.

"Crap, did I kill their fathers or steal their wives? Is this hatred even justified?"

Fang Yuan was speechless.

In truth, Lin Leiyue was one of the most beautiful women in the Spirit Returning Sect. Coupled with her talent and gentle demeanour, as well as her high status, she was adored by many. Thus, when the admirers found out that Fang Yuan had a former rightful claim to her, they all saw it as an intense rivalry.

"Ah haha!"

Fang Yuan felt slightly awkward dealing with Miss Qing. But this was not the case with Lin Leiyue.

After all, he had watched her grow up and they had no bad blood. Therefore, there was nothing to be guilty about.

"So it's you, Sister Leiyue. It seems like you are living well in the Spirit Returning Sect. This is a cause for celebration indeed!"

"I'm sorry for what happened before!"

Lin Leiyue had turned slightly red, and she bowed apologetically.

She was unsure about her feelings towards her former fiancé.

But after this outing, she had at least understood that the world was vast and that she did not want to limit her opportunities in any way.

"Qing, Brother Fang is a friend of mine. This whole thing must be a joke. Let us drop this matter, shall we?"

Leiyue gave Qing's hand a squeeze.

After all, it would hurt their reputation if word got out about how the Four Seas Court mistreated a visitor. It was widely rumoured that the Four Seas Court was working for the Spirit Returning Sect, and to have this matter escalate might confirm these rumours. Lin Leiyue did not want that.

"Fine!"

Qing felt like crying. Her secret savings were all gone.

"But...you have to return the hairpin to me! It...it was given to

me for my birthday by my grandfather!"

In fact, Qing had made it all up. It was just the most expensive piece of jewellery out of the rest.

"Oh, I'm sorry!"

Fang Yuan laughed and took out the hairpin.

"If I had offended you, Miss Qing, I hope that you won't hold it against me!"

"This is more like it!"

Qing's eyes gleamed, and she grabbed the hairpin from Fang Yuan greedily. She then thought to herself regretfully, 'If I had known that this lad was going to be this obliging, I would've asked him for more jewellery pieces...boohoo...'

The more she thought about it, the more she cursed inwardly.

"Alright, alright!"

Lin Leiyue could not help but whisper into Qing's ear.

"Really?"

Whatever she had heard must have delighted her, for Qing immediately jumped up and nodded vigorously.

"Yes yes yes!"

She then turned to Fang Yuan and said, "Let bygones be bygones. I won't pursue the matter anymore. Brother Fang, you are welcome to rob me again. After all, someone's going to pay me back doubly...hoho!"

As the words left her, Qing immediately knew that she had made a mistake, and quickly covered her mouth.

"Who would have known that this lass would be so money-grubbing and miserly..."

The crowd had realised what was going on and did not know what to say to Qing.

"Brother Fang, are you here for the Song Zhong issue? If I remember correctly, you don't know martial arts..."

Lin Leiyue smiled demurely and changed the subject deftly as if nothing had happened.

"Ah I've been practising a little, and I want to see the bustling city for myself!"

Fang Yuan replied carelessly.

"Song Zhong is fierce and stubborn and is a highly skilled pugilist. He's still a great threat even though he might be injured. Please be careful!"

Lin Leiyue had no idea about Fang Yuan's background and warned him out of concern.

"Okay!"

Fang Yuan nodded and turned to leave.

"Stop!"

At this point, one of the onlooking young men stepped in front of Fang Yuan, blocking his passage.

"Have you not heard Sister Lin? This is not a place you can stay in for an extended period of time. Don't think that you can go on a rampage with your half-assed skills. Leave while you can!"

A bunch of young male disciples, regardless of their near-zero chances with Lin Leiyue, were worried that sparks would fly between Fang Yuan and Lin Leiyue. They all had the same goal in mind, to eliminate this competitor!

"Ah, Brother Zhao, that's where you are wrong!"

A male disciple with a freckled face laughed coldly and stepped forward.

"Since this Young Master Fang was able to bully our Sister Qing, it must mean that he is very highly-skilled. Although I am

untalented, I challenge you to a fight. Do have mercy on me!"

"How can you leave me out of this?"

"Let me! Let me!"

The male disciples were worked up into a frenzy, eyes gleaming with bloodlust.

This was their best chance to prove themselves in front of Lin Leiyue!

"Qing, tell me honestly. What's your progress in the Qingluo Technique that Master taught you?"

As she observed the going-ons around her, Lin Leiyue pulled Young Qing towards her and whispered the question into her ear.

"Grade 5!"

Qing stuck out her tongue.

"Ssss..."

Lin Leiyue sucked in a breath of cold air.

Young Qing was a crazy lass. She was a lady and had the backing of powerful figures in the Sect. None of the male disciples dared to go all out when sparring with her. As a result, not many people were aware of Qing's true abilities.

But this Fang Yuan, hasn't he only been practising martial arts for a short while? How could he have defeated a martial artist of the 5th Gate?

Lin Leiyue observed Fang Yuan a while more and realised for the first time that this young lad from the valley was indeed mysterious. She had wanted to defuse the situation but was at a loss for words now.

"This..."

Fang Yuan quickly scanned his immediate surroundings and deduced that these were basically martial artists who were either

at the 4th or 5th Gates in martial art cultivation. They were no match for him, especially after he had consumed so much spiritual food.

"This...is the effect of magical energy?"

Fang Yuan was suddenly enlightened. Magical energy led to alertness and willpower! If he had more magical energy than normal, he would be able to gauge the skill level of his opponents through detailed observations. He would also be able to conceal his own abilities. Of course, the prerequisite was that he could not be too far behind in martial arts cultivation than these adversaries.

Right now, after Fang Yuan had made some adjustments, none of his foes could tell that he was actually a master in his own right, having broken through the 5th Gate. On the other hand, their skills and abilities were all obvious to Fang Yuan.

"I can't gauge Lin Leiyue's abilities though. She has a clear and bright aura emanating from her body. That is not normal!"

Fang Yuan increased his alertness but displayed a cornered look outwardly.

"This...probably isn't a good idea! I'm a country bumpkin with no self-restraint. What if I hurt you all too badly?"

"What?!"

The crowd of male disciples were enraged by Fang Yuan's taunt, and the freckled disciple shouted, "If I am killed by you, it can only be said that I was unlucky. No one shall avenge me. Everyone here, be my witness!"

"Come on!"

Under the gaze of Lin Leiyue and a few female juniors, he was eager to show off and jumped right into the fray.

"The humble Sun Tieshu, looking forward to being schooled by you!"

'Idiot!'

At this, Fang Yuan silently rolled his eyes.

If the crowd had ganged up on Fang Yuan, he would have been on the losing end no matter how skilled he was.

But this bunch of jokers actually intended to take turns to fight him individually. They must be tired of living!

It was just as well that his Eagle Claw Iron Skin Technique required more practice to increase proficiency points. This battle was a good opportunity.

However, just as Fang Yuan prepared to fight, his body hairs suddenly stood on end.

This feeling reminded him of a chilling encounter back when he was four or five years old. He was taking a stroll in the forest then and was eyed by a wolf hiding in the shadows.

'Is this...an ambush?'

Fang Yuan glided back by several steps and glanced at Lin Leiyue. Then he was struck by a realisation!

"It's Song Zhong!"

"To think that he would be this headstrong. Even as he is wanted from all sides by his enemies, he chooses to retaliate instead of hiding!"

"Lin Leiyue is the direct disciple of the sect leader and has a very important status. She will be a good hostage!"

"But isn't there word out there that Song Zhong is gravely injured? Are the stories untrue?"

...

His mind whirring, Fang Yuan distanced himself from Lin Leiyue.

She was the epicentre of trouble and it was best to get away from

her.

"Punk, you're running away?"

When Sun Tieshu saw that Fang Yuan was retreating, he paused.

"Trying to be funny huh? Are you going to be a piece of trash now?"

"Ah...yes, I'm physically weak. How can I ever hope to match you people? I have been a laughing stock! I'll take my leave!"

Fang Yuan spouted a load of nonsense and withdrew to the sidelines.

It was at this moment that everything changed!

Chapter 38: Intense Battle

"Whoosh!"

"Bang!"

A loud noise was heard. Numerous steel needles flew towards a group of Spirit Returning Sect disciples.

"Hidden weapons?"

Fang Yuan was confused. He was already prepared to jump forward and hide behind a giant rock to escape the incoming needles.

"Puff!"

However, the group of disciples were not so lucky.

There were piercing sounds everywhere and there was a bloody explosion in the forest. Many corpses were lying on the ground and the whole scene became very bloody.

After that wave of attack, Fang Yuan then popped half of his head out and saw Disciple Sun, who was mocking him previously, lying down in a pool of blood. His body became like a hornet's nest.

A long silhouette appeared and it seemed to be carrying something.

"That is Song Zhong!"

Lin Leiyue screamed and waved her sleeve. A hidden arrow was shot up into the sky and a high-pitched noise was heard. It then exploded into flames.

"Hehe...are you going to look for Elder Li?"

Song Zhong saw what happened and laughed. "There is no need for you to do anything! I have already brought him here!"

He tossed and the object he was carrying in his hand suddenly rolled towards Lin Leiyue.

["Master Li?!"](#)

Miss Qing screamed and almost fainted.

What Song Zhong was carrying was Master Li's head, with his eyes still open. Whose head could it be other than his?

"How is it possible?"

Seeing this scene, Lin Leiyue felt light headed.

"Haha....This Old Li's Scorching Sun Palm is quite powerful. Unfortunately, it is still inferior compared to mine!"

Song Zhong coughed out a mouthful of blood and was still very cocky. "Shi Yutong that slut, she thought that I was injured badly and sent you to finish me off. She also sent Elder Li to keep a lookout for you just in case....However, she didn't expect that I would have a chance to obtain the Resurrection Pill left by the divine healer. Thus, I had already recovered from my injuries. Haha...."

Lin Leiyue closed her mouth and felt hopeless.

Lin Leiyue had read about the Resurrection Pill in the sect's secret manuals before. It was named as such as the pill would be able to resurrect a dead person as long as he had a remaining breath. He would be able to recover within the night but would surely die after 7 days!

Within the 7 days, the martial artist's essence, spirit and magic would be at his peak.

Since Elder Li was ranked higher than Song Zhong in the sect and Song Zhong was definitely inferior to him, how could he be killed so easily?

Lin Leiyue broke out in cold sweat.

The situation had come to a point beyond salvation.

Even if the other elders from the sect saw the signal for help and rushed here to help them, they would probably not be able to stay

alive till then.

After all, there was a huge difference between the inner power of a martial artist at 2 Peaceful Gates and that of another at 3 Perilous Gates. Even if the opponent was able to suppress his injuries and start a killing spree, he would still be counterattacked with serious injuries!

"Elder Song, we both have nothing against each other. Why are you doing this?"

Lin Leiyue asked calmly.

"Nothing against each other?"

Song Zhong laughed and said, "Shi Yutong that slut had kicked me out of the sect and had ordered me to be killed. I will not let you go today for what you have done to my son!"

As Fang Yuan heard his words, he kept his head low and was even more confused when Song Zhong looked at him.

Even though he knew that Song Zhong was unaware of the real murderer, but being an ex-fiancé of Lin Leiyue, Song Zhong would definitely not spare him and Lin Leiyue the 'adulterous couple'!

Luckily, Song Zhong was putting most of his attention on Lin Leiyue. Fang Yuan was convinced that Song Zhong would kill himself after killing the rest.

'This case was serious. If Song Zhong knew who was the real murderer, I would surely not be spared....'

Fang Yuan was speechless.

With his magical energy, Fang Yuan could feel that he was being watched even though Song Zhong had put most of his attention on Lin Leiyue.

"What do you want now?"

Lin Leiyue became nervous as Song Zhong kept going nearer to her.

How could one who had consumed the Resurrection Pill and was going to die 7 days later be keeping her hostage? Song Zhong had wanted her to die together with him.

Plus, he would also not spare Fang Yuan and the rest of the disciples.

"I'm going to die.... I have yet to explore the vast world.... I'm not ready to die!"

Lin Leiyue bit her teeth tightly and said, "Everyone, listen up. This person is out of control. We have to work together to defeat him! Elder Li is highly skilled and Song Zhong must have been injured while fighting against Elder Li!"

Lin Leiyue was speaking to the desperate survivors. After hearing what she said and seeing that Song Zhong has a burnt palm print on his chest and a bloody mouth, they seemed hopeful.

"Miss Lin, you have a good foresight.... Unfortunately, you have no idea what an injured 7th Gate martial artist can do!"

Song Zhong went forward.

He appeared relaxed but was still able to move swiftly to one of the male disciples. He casually grabbed the disciple's neck and strangled him to death. His lifeless corpse fell to the ground.

A [Martial Artist (7th Gate)] was indeed mighty.

"Frozen Moon Swordplay!"

At that moment, Lin Leiyue exclaimed as she struck towards Song Zhong in front of the rest who were in shock.

"Whoosh!"

Her shiny sword gave out a hint of cold energy as it was special.

"Great sword skills! Great inner power!"

Song Zhong focused and deflected the sword with his fingernail.

"Ding!"

With a distinct resonance from the sword fight, Lin Leiyue fell a few steps back and looked at Song Zhong who was pale and expressionless. She was delighted. "This person's skills have dropped tremendously and is weaker than a 7th Gate martial artist. Don't be fooled by him!"

"I should really kill this b*tch!"

Song Zhong's expression changed and leapt forward.

"Flying Swallow Piercing Strike!"

"Green Emerald Palm!"

"Frozen Frosty Moon!"

Under the encouragement of Lin Leiyue, the remaining disciples attacked together without holding back and managed to surround Song Zhong.

"You crazy clown, how dare you create trouble here?"

Song Zhong was surrounded and gave a ferocious look. "It is because I have exhausted my Bone Piercing Needles. If not, how are you able to survive till now?"

"Furthermore, you all have no idea how powerful a 3 Perilous Gate expert with inner force can be!"

Song Zhong looked at both of his hands and his shirt started moving on his own. "Demonic Wind Hand!"

He shouted and both of his palms produced a shockingly powerful force.

"Puff! Puff!"

Miss Qing and the rest changed their expressions and felt a great force going towards them. They were then thrown back and suffered internal injuries.

They were martial artists of the 4th or 5th Gate, and as such, possessed only inner power and not inner force.

After the Pain Gate was broken through, the inner power would be combined and after intense training, energy akin to indestructible metallic-like threads would form. That would truly be inner force!

The difference between inner power and inner force was huge.

This was why a [Martial Artist (6th Gate)] could become an Elder of a sect, which would allow one to have power and prestige.

Song Zhong was demonstrating his power and only the talented Lin Leiyue could survive with the help of a spiritual pill. The rest of the disciples were all defeated.

"Cough...."

After one move, Song Zhong's face became flushed and he was quite surprised that Lin Leiyue was still surviving. "You actually survived. You should feel proud of yourself even though you are going to die next!"

Lin Leiyue was holding her sword with her right hand and it trembled slightly. Despite that, she was still calm.

The spiritual pill inside her body was healing her previous injuries. If she could survive this fight, she would likely become an expert in martial arts!

With her talent, he needed to destroy her completely to deny her any chances of survival. Otherwise, she would be able to make an unexpected comeback.

"But....how am I still able to survive? Almost all the disciples are wiped out...."

Lin Leiyue had sealed up all her acupoints to recover from her internal injuries but it was still not an easy task.

"Even though Fang Yuan is a Martial Artist (5th Gate), he had missed golden opportunity to attack. Even if he does help now, what is the point?"

At that moment, she was filled with despair.

"B*tch, I will send you now to see my dead son....."

Song Zhong took in a deep breath and managed to suppress his injuries. He then took a few steps forward.

It seemed like the previous fight was not an easy one for him. Suddenly, he sensed a slight movement in his surroundings.

"Hmm....trying to escape?"

He turned his head, grabbed a stone and threw it at Fang Yuan

"Whiz!"

A high-pitched noise came from the flying rock as if it was an arrow being shot from a bow, and it hit a silhouette.

"Bang!"

The rock landed and a crater was formed. The silhouette managed to dodge the rock, and it happened to be Fang Yuan.

He touched his head and smiled. "You can continue old man. I promise I will not say anything out to anyone...."

Miss Qing, who was lying down and coughing out blood, heard what Fang Yuan said and became angry.

They were fighting for their lives here and this bast*rd was trying to escape? Hmph! He was definitely an ass*le. It made her furious to think that she actually thought that he was a good guy.

"I am not deaf. Are you this b*tch's fiancé?"

Song Zhong squinted his eyes and examined Fang Yuan. "Since you are, you shall not be spared as well!"

"What the f*ck? Crazy old man, please do tell me if you are tired of living!"

Fang Yuan was furious.

What was there to say to the person who was trying to kill him?

His expression became serious and his skin tone started to darken. Both of his hands formed the shape of the Eagle Claws and he leapt forward.

"Chirp!"

While he was executing the Eagle Claw Technique, it swept through the air and produced a sound like an eagle's cry.

Song Zhong closed his eyes and felt as if a flying overlord was flying swiftly towards him from the sky.

"Great Eagle Claw!"

At that moment, the rest were all in shock.

Master Li and Elder Li are the same person.

Chapter 39: Murderer

"Die, old fool!"

Fang Yuan bellowed, and his back muscles moved like how a bird spread its wings.

A large power welled up in his back and travelled to his arms, wrists, palms and finally to the tips of his fingers.

"Pitter-patter!"

The joints in his body exploded with energy. The joints in his body acted as leverage. With each joint, the power increased manifold.

"Eagle Claw!"

Lin Leiyue was shocked when she witnessed the scene that unfolded in front of her.

She had seen the move executed by Yu Qiuleng, who was renowned for the Eagle Claw Technique. Other than the fact that Yu Qiuleng was more skilled than Fang Yuan, the young lad was comparable in terms of vitality and spirit.

"Is this still the old Brother Fang?"

Lin Leiyue was astonished and did not know what to think.

"He is so... so..."

Her jaw dropped and the image of a gentle and prim lady was gone.

She could only think of one thing, "If he had used his full power then, I would not have been alive!"

In truth, she had overestimated Fang Yuan.

Fang Yuan was not as skilled in the Eagle Claw Technique then as he was now. If he had trained systematically, he would have made rapid progress in his martial arts skills.

It was apt to say that he was seen in a new light after not seeing him for a few days as his skills had greatly improved.

"Huhu!"

The claws were capable of ripping organs. The gust generated by the claws were sufficient to cut the skin even before the claws landed on target.

"Good lad!"

Song Zhong panted, his face red. He waved his hands in the air to form a sign, "Demonic Wind Hand!"

"Boom!"

The claw and the palm made contact and a loud sound was heard.

"Whoosh!"

The dust rose. Fang Yuan flew away and landed squarely on the ground, a trail of blood dripping from the corner of his mouth.

"Why are your inner power and your stamina so overbearing?"

Song Zhong stood his ground, his face puzzled. He let out a laugh. "It's a shame, no matter how unreasonable, that you will never be able to bridge the gap... cough cough...."

Purplish-black blood started to spurt out while he was talking.

"If you are a normal 6th Gate Martial Artist, I would naturally run away... but you are just an old dog. How long can your body last?"

Fang Yuan wriggled the joints in his palms which cracked with a crisp sound.

He had heard that the Resurrection Pill could only treat injuries once and keep the martial artist at his peak. It was effective in treating Elder Li's injuries even before he was attacked by Lin Leiyue and the others.

"Old...old dog?!"

Song Zhong was stumped. Even Lin Leiyue was shocked.

"You...you punk, you are dead meat!"

Song Zhong seethed with anger. He had never been humiliated like this before as he was a [Martial Artist (7th Gate)].

Even when he was banished from the sect, a small disagreement led to this bloodshed.

Yet, his punk dared to insult him in the face?

Lin Leiyue found it hard to believe and came to a misperception that the world had undergone a great change.

"Haha... Old dog, it is still unconfirmed who will live and who will die!"

Fang Yuan laughed and attacked, giving Song Zhong no opportunity to reply, "Watch my combo!"

Song Zhong was at his wit's end. However, he had a strong foundation in the martial arts. There was no one around that could match his inner power if he was given enough time to recover.

As such, the only strategy was to attack relentlessly!

Fang Yuan was confident in this aspect!

After all, he had almost twice as much Essence as a commoner, which meant that he had extraordinary endurance and recovery.

He was able to narrow the gap due to his inner power from the combination of Black Sand Palm (Grade 5) and the Eagle Claw Iron Skin Technique.

"Schhhh"

The gust generated from Eagle Claw cut the air.

"Impossible, how did you recover so fast?"

Song Zhong was astonished. He gritted his teeth and asked, "Are you trying to wear me out?"

His face, which was originally red, started to have blood droplets flowing out from the pores, "The soul must burn to unleash the blood demon!"

That was his secret move which allowed him to suppress his injury and boost his final strength. He had previously used it to kill Elder Li. The stress caused by using it a second time broke his body.

"Die! Demonic Wind Hand—— Blood Palm!"

Song Zhong lunged forward. Fresh blood dripped from his right hand and formed a coat of red around his palm. His palm clashed with the Eagle Claw.

"Boom!"

There was another resounding noise as Fang Yuan flew backwards. His face changed and he vomited a large amount of fresh blood, "This feels good!"

His eyes were fervent and he stood back up, "Again!"

"This lad... is he crazy?!"

Song Zhong was afraid of this fighting style that Fang Yuan displayed. Fang Yuan was totally not concerned about his life.

"Whoosh!"

The sound created by those outside could be heard. Given by the sound produced, it was safe to say that there were highly-skilled fighters amongst them in the all-out pursuit of Song Zhong.

Song Zhong paled. He immediately turned and fled into the densely vegetated jungle.

Given the situation, there was no way he could murder the 'adulterous couple'. The only way was to hide and wait for the opportunity to arise.

He still had plenty of opportunities as long as it was within seven days. This was especially true for the youth in front of him. Fang

Yuan was very difficult to handle and without resting, Song Zhong was uncertain of being able to beat him.

"Where are you going?"

Fang Yuan bellowed as he gave chase.

How could he let his opponent escape?

Even if he knew the properties of the Resurrection Pill, there was a possibility in this vast world that Song Zhong might encounter a miracle and survive. Fang Yuan would never be at ease unless he saw Song Zhong dead before his eyes.

When would there be a better opportunity?

His opponent's energy was depleted. It was a good opportunity to kill Song Zhong even for someone of his skill level.

There might not be another opportunity if he missed it.

"Whoosh!"

In the deep forest, the two of them ran. No one knew how far they had run.

"This old fool really has a lot of endurance. I wonder if it is the effect of the pill. "

Fang Yuan saw that the distance between the two of them was not narrowing. He looked around at the surroundings before he shouted, "Old dog, don't you want to know how your precious son died?"

"What?"

Upon hearing this, Song Zhong stopped running and turned around, his eyes fixed on Fang Yuan. "What do you know? Speak!"

There was still a distance between Song Zhong and the troops. Even if he was delayed, he would have sufficient time to escape. He was more concerned about the truth and made the decision to stop.

"Who killed that dog...Haha..."

Fang Yuan did not stop. He rushed forward, his hands forming the Eagle Claw and struck at Song Zhong. "Go and ask your son!"

"You brat!"

Song Zhong's expression turned cold. "Do you really think I cannot kill you?"

He raised his palms towards the sky. An unyielding power could be felt from his palms.

"Bang!"

The fist and the claw met. Song Zhong's expression changed. "No...you..."

He stumbled back and looked at his hands, only to see that there were holes in his palms with black blood flowing out.

"You used poison...no, this is the Black Sand Palm...It was you!"

His eyes were bloodshot. He leapt forward, only to crash onto the ground.

"I hate you! I hate you!"

Song Zhong roared as he looked at his palm. He glared at Fang Yuan with a look that could kill.

If he had known that the killer of his son was standing right before him, he would have used all means available to kill Fang Yuan, even if he had to sacrifice his life.

However, he had been plotted against and there was no way he could retaliate.

"You used the Resurrection Pill and used the secret arts many times. Your energy is depleted and you are crippled...After my Black Sand Palm, there is no way you would be able to survive. On this day next year, it will be your death anniversary!"

Fang Yuan's expression was cold. He took out a Yama's Order and consumed it.

Song Zhong was undoubtedly a master of the 3 Perilous Gates. He was struck by the Black Sand Palm and was injured but managed to counter his opponent's attack on his inner power. This caused a portion of the Pearl Tail Snake's poison to backflow, causing harm to Fang Yuan as well.

However, Fang Yuan had the Yama's Order which was able to act as an antidote to the poison.

Song Zhong was not so lucky.

"Please be on your way!"

Fang Yuan stepped forward and looked at Song Zhong who was already unable to speak. His expression turned cold. "Song Yujie repeatedly send people to cause trouble to me. Do you expect me to die and not retaliate?"

"As for you, you are yet another troublemaker. I cannot let you live for one more day!"

While the Resurrection Pill was able to work miracles, its effects could be nullified. There were a few fabled magical pills that could save Song Zhong's life.

Fang Yuan did not want to create more problems even if it was unlikely.

"Please be on your way. Remember not to trifle with me in your next life!"

Fang Yuan nodded his head, lifted his right hand and brought it down sharply.

"Boom!"

Blood spurted out.

...

Outside the forest, the sound of hurried footsteps could be heard.

"Footprints, over there!"

"Song Zhong is just ahead. He is not going anywhere!"

A group of martial artists surrounded the area. At the front of the group was Lin Leiyue and two protectors of the Spirit Returning Sect.

"Leiyue, did that friend of yours chase after Song Zhong alone?"

A protector shook her head, "Oh dear, that old thief is highly skilled and cunning. Your friend might have already fallen into his hands."

"Fang Yuan... He would not!"

Miss Qing said from the side. Those who had seen Fang Yuan and Song Zhong clashed would have confidence in him as well.

"Hmmm... Song Zhong possessed a high level of inner force. A person with inner power would not be able to stand up to him. Even if he was avaricious, he would have died..."

Another person chipped in but stopped momentarily when Lin Leiyue looked at him..

"Hmmm? Someone is here!"

The people in front came to a stop when they saw a silhouette walking out of the dense forest.

"Brother Fang!"

Miss Qing was pleasantly surprised. "Where is that old traitor, Song Zhong?"

"Here!"

Fang Yuan raised his right hand and Song Zhong's severed head appeared. This caused the onlookers to be bewildered and uncertain.

"The old traitor had been served his just dessert?"

The two protectors could not believe their eyes.

Chapter 40: Secret News

Song Zhong, the previous elder of the Spirit Returning Sect, had been executed!

The news travelled far and wide within the entire Qinghe County, and of course, there was another not-so-credible rumour which said that if the one who gave the final strike was a young man, he must be highly skilled and therefore deserving of the rewards the Sect had promised.

Many martial artists did not believe that a young man could take down Song Zhong.

Who was Song Zhong? He was a renowned fearsome martial artist of the 7th Gate and an expert in inner force!

Even the eldest disciple of Spirit Returning Sect, Lin Leiyue could not hold a candle to Song Zhong. How skilful would the young man be to dare challenge the Spirit Returning Sect's top disciple?

This must be a rumour!

Song Zhong was likely to have been taken down by a skilled Spirit Returning Sect member.

Just by his cultivation level alone would allow him to wreck havoc in Qinghe County.

Only a few who knew the truth became a little worried after hearing the rumours.

...

"Fang Yuan, are you really leaving?"

He was at a small pavilion near the outskirts of Qinghe County.

Lin Leiyue appeared confused and looked at the young man on a horse. "Just by seeing your potential in martial arts cultivation alone, you can enter the Spirit Returning Sect and become a direct disciple..."

"My apologies, I have been used to exploring the wild, and cannot tolerate being confined... Sister Leiyue, I shall see you when we meet again!"

Fang Yuan rejected her offer, whipped the horse and galloped away. Not long after, he disappeared within the horizon.

The many people within the Sect, and the main troublemaker, Lin Leiyue, would bring many problems to Fang Yuan if he were to accept her offer.

Knowing this, why would he stay long in the county?

After trading for what he wanted, Fang Yuan left the country without hesitation.

However, as for Lin Leiyue, looking at his shadow disappearing in the horizon brought much disappointment as she felt conflicted.

"Are you feeling regretful?"

With a flash, Shi Yutong appeared within the pavilion like a ghost.

"He has his path to go, and I have mine. Since he made the decision, what more can we do?"

Lin Leiyue raised her head and stubbornly replied.

"Mmm... That's good!"

Shi Yutong nodded her head with satisfaction and looked in the direction where Fang Yuan left. "But, this fiancé of yours has shocking potential and is not the average person!"

"He..."

Lin Leiyue became excited. "Master... Please enlighten me!"

"Keke..."

Shi Yutong snickered, and touched her nose. "Girl, you have become competitive... Don't worry, to me, you still have the greatest potential among your peers!"

"Then why was it that previously..."

Lin Leiyue was sceptical. Against Song Zhong, she could only withstand his fists and defend, but Fang Yuan could retaliate head-on and therefore everything felt illogical.

"That was because that young man had a good foundation... Leiyue, you should have known. There are people who are able to harness and use their martial arts the moment they begin to learn it, and can even become Martial Artist (4th or 5th Gate)! Fang Yuan is as such, either he has a great natural talent, or that he had consumed some spiritual food or treasure, and based on your description, Song Zhong was at the brink of death and had used up most of his inner force, and fight after fight, he could be exhausted to death and I wouldn't be surprised..."

Shi Yutong explained.

She felt that it was a pity that the young man had such great potential. He had exceedingly high Essence, Spirit and Magic. If his magical energy was many folds more of the average human, he would be a well-known legendary spiritual knight.

But for this, even if he would be outstanding in his youth, his age would catch up.

After all, inner force was magical and cannot seem to be depleted when one was harnessing it.

No matter one's foundation, those who had the inner force befitting of the 3 Perilous Gates would undergo a drastic change in their bodies.

Those with better physical quality would experience slower progress when they reach this stage, albeit still having a small advantage over the others, but it would not be as obvious as before.

Shi Yutong looked at her disciple and commented, "Leiyue, don't be discouraged. You have gained through this experience. If you can break through the 6th Gate, you would be the first among the

young people within Qinghe County!"

"Yes, Master!"

Lin Leiyue clenched her fist, looked in the direction with Fang Yuan left, and seemed as though she was not willing to admit defeat.

...

"Go!"

Fang Yuan sped off on his horse, and seeing the scenery beside him fly past, he felt free like a fish in the ocean, a bird in the sky, a tiger in the forest.

Qinghe County was complicated, like a giant trap.

He was still unfamiliar with the outside world, had little relations with the powerful people, and therefore might not be pulled into conflicts.

But that might not be the case if he decided to stay longer within the county, or even join the Spirit Returning Sect.

"At the end of the day, the treasures from the outside world cannot compare to the comfort of my home!"

Fang Yuan smiled to himself.

He had gained a lot from this trip to the county.

Defeating Song Zhong and collecting spiritual plants is one thing, and gaining from the Spirit Returning Sect's hidden library is another.

He was rewarded with the Elemental Returning Order for killing Song Zhong and used it to exchange for a visit to the hidden library.

If he requested for a martial arts manual, he knew he would die and the Elemental Returning Order would not be able to save him.

But if he requested to take a look at the normal books, that would

be effortless to the Sect and he would not be denied entry.

Seeing his relationship with Lin Leiyue, Shi Yutong very quickly agreed after he requested for the visit. She allowed Fang Yuan to stay and browse through the books for 3 days.

The only regret Fang Yuan had was being unable to see for himself the real Wu Zong in the legends.

"Hmm... There are so many highly skilled sect members observing me, just not the great Wu Zong!"

Fang Yuan laughed and slowed the horse down.

The truth is that other than the system within his mind, if word of his martial arts spreads out, it would at most be taken as a small miracle.

Without looking at the explanations within the system, who would believe that he had the ability to cultivate spiritual plants, and even allow normal plants to evolve and have special traits?

Because of this, he was unafraid.

It still led him to feel uneasy with so many people spying on him.

"Heh... Spirit Returning Sect, what's so good about you?"

As he was quite a distance from Qinghe County, he slowed the horse down and slowly paced forward.

"But for a price to pay, it was worth it!"

He thought through in the perspective of the sect. After all, he was an outsider and precautions still had to be taken against him. Understanding their rationale was one thing, accepting it was another.

The risk of entering the hidden library was worth it.

Within the many books and literature artefacts, Fang Yuan found what he was looking for.

"I never knew... This world is so huge! Comparatively, a normal

martial artist would never have the chance to know the truth... Even the spiritual knights only know the tip of the iceberg, what more about the mysterious alchemy masters and dream masters?"

This information was obtained from a biography of a martial artist, and it was like a treasure to him.

The author of the book was an elder in the sect long ago. He managed to break through every single Gate possible, and by exploring the outside world, he had the chance to exceed Wu Zong.

Although he did not succeed at the end, he passed on not long after returning to the Sect, he left behind lots of discussion and stories of his exploration, and it was an overload of information about the outside world.

Within his discussion, he mentioned the formation of spiritual lands.

"The spiritual land is formed by heaven's will and created by the gathering of earthly energy. It can only be encountered and cannot be created by man.....this sentence is both right and wrong!"

Fang Yuan read on. "It seems that the small spiritual land which the Spirit Returning Sect lives on formed naturally. The first Sect Master knew it was a piece of treasure and shifted the entire Sect to where it was now, using it as a foundation... But there is another type of spiritual land, linked to the cultivators!"

"Rumour has it that there was a highly skilled cultivator, and under certain conditions, like death, it may result in the birth of a new spiritual land."

"Even though this cultivator may not be Wu Zong, whatever recorded was just rumours. But then again, the entire world may have hidden mysteries. Since an alchemy master is able to gain the blessing of the heavens and earth and concoct spiritual pills, another cultivator would be able to create a spiritual land, fertile land.....it is not impossible!

"I just wonder, who was the source of the spiritual land at Green Peak..."

Fang Yuan looked up, staring at the peak of the Clear Spirit Mountain, and felt a sense of familiarity. "I'm home..."

Within the secluded valley.

"Keke! Keke!"

Fang Yuan stepped into the valley, and the Flower Fox Ferret pounced on him, nibbling at his robe, as though it was very excited.

"Eh, why are you so anxious?"

Fang Yuan was shocked as he saw the Flower Fox Ferret running towards the farm, as he sort of guessed what had happened.

"Could it be..."

He was filled with emotions as he rushed out.

Upon reaching the tea forest, a fragrance filled the air, making him feel more refreshed.

"Indeed..."

Fang Yuan was ecstatic, as he saw another tree with the Questioning Heart Tea leaves.

This spiritual plant had new leaves growing and the tea fragrance was intense.

"Keke!"

The Flower Fox Ferret pointed to the soil, and Fang Yuan noticed at the root of the Questioning Heart Tea that there were large amounts of spiritual fertilizer.

"It seems that the Flower Fox Ferret was hard at work while I was away..."

Fang Yuan was left speechless as he witnessed what was before him.

The Flower Fox Ferret was rather proud; it did not care about other normal plants, and only took care of the Questioning Heart Tea and Vermillion Jade Rice.

It could not hold back as it saw the leaves of the Questioning Heart Tea growing out.

"Without my Meditative Tea Ceremony, there would not be any Questioning Heart Tea that would increase your magical energy!"

Fang Yuan stroked the Flower Fox Ferret's head, "Don't worry, you will have your share!"

After reading through the books, he had a deeper understanding of the benefits of the Questioning Heart Tea.

There were different levels of spiritual plants. The lowest level included the Vermillion Jade Rice and the Emerald Grass, but these two could also increase one's Spirit and Essence.

As for spiritual plants which can increase magical energy? It was unheard of, and if people knew about it they would go crazy for it!

In order to be a spiritual knight or alchemy master, the most important factor is magical energy!

Chapter 41: Breakthrough

It was dawn.

Fang Yuan came to a newly reclaimed farmland. Vermillion Jade Rice was grown on that farm, and he planted the seeds of the Emerald Grass there as well.

"The Emerald Grass does not require a good environment to grow in. It is able to gather earthly energy and make the soil fertile. The Emerald Grass complements the Vermillion Jade Rice when planted next to them!"

Planting a spiritual plant was a complicated process. Fang Yuan was very focused on it and only took a short break half an hour later to wipe his sweat.

"Phew....The newly reclaimed farmland has already reached its maximum capacity. There is not much land left in the secluded valley to expand the farm. Furthermore, the expanded farm will be exposed!"

He was helpless. "I may have to move the spiritual plant to another place in the future!"

What place would that be? It would be the spiritual land in Green Peak.

As that place was very secluded, a Wu Zong would never be able to realise that a farm did exist in that location and would only be troubled by the presence of the Red-eyed White Birds.

Fang Yuan had decided to relocate the secrets of the secluded valley to the new location after he had solved the current problem.

After all, he was different from Master Wenxin.

He had been attracting a lot of attention lately and this would increase the chances of others spying on him.

"However, the amount of Vermillion Jade Rice I have now is

sufficient enough for the Flower Fox Ferret and myself to consume for quite a long period of time!"

Fang Yuan touched the Flower Fox Ferret's head and smiled.

The Spirit Returning Sect Head Shi Yutong could not make decisions regarding the spiritual land by herself. There was still a need to accommodate the needs of every faction as well as the export of spiritual plants. Even if the main disciples were allocated with some spiritual plants, it was not a large amount.

Fang Yuan estimated that they could either eat the Vermillion Jade Rice once a week or treat it preciously like a spiritual pill and only consume it when he was ready to break gates. After all, they were not as luxurious as him!

In fact, the previous amount of his consumption of the Vermillion Jade Rice could be 10 times more than Lin Leiyue's!

The Spirit Returning Sect was not luxurious enough to allocate such a large amount of Vermillion Jade Rice to just one person.

Shi Yutong had no idea about Fang Yuan's diet and thought that he must have been lucky to consume some natural spiritual treasure.

Even spiritual pills were not natural. They were scarce and could not fulfil the requirement of a daily supply of staple like the spiritual rice could.

This was the reason why Fang Yuan's foundations in martial arts were so scarily strong, as his Essence, Spirit and Magic increased tremendously like a rocket.

"Other normal human beings would benefit lesser after breaking through another gate as compared to me....."

Fang Yuan realised that the quantitative numbers in his stats window could be way higher than any other martial artist who was of the same level as him.

"Of course, after breaking through the 6th Gate, my inner power will be fused and become inner force. Then, things will be different. Unless I can increase the supply of the Vermillion Jade Rice further and maintain my head start, the others will eventually catch up in future!"

This was a bad news as it meant that Fang Yuan's advantage would be diminished. However, as he looked at his farm, he smiled brightly.

It was not difficult to eat the Vermillion Jade Rice every day, was it?

He not only had the Vermillion Jade Rice but also had the spiritual tea. He could drink it whenever he wanted to.

"Essence, spirit and magic could be considered as the three most important factors to one's cultivation. Of the three, Essence possesses a physical form, Spirit is dependent on Essence and possesses a form too. Only Magic is formless!"

"A rise in magical energy will result in stark improvements in many other aspects!"

Through the previous trip and a few fights, Fang Yuan realised the effect of magical energy.

Although he could not convert it to combat power directly, he could sense the enemy's moves and eventually predict the outcome of the fight even before it began, making it extremely useful.

This was also why he valued the Questioning Heart Tea even more.

After a hard day's work, Fang Yuan went to clean himself and changed into a new set of clothes. Then, he started to make some tea.

With his past experiences, he felt more natural when making the tea as he was much more familiar with the process, and there was much improvement this time.

First of all, the water used was different.

According to an old saying, the most preferred type of water when making tea would be to use mountain spring water, followed by water from a river and the least preferred would be water from a well.

Previously, Fang Yuan used the spring water originated from the secluded valley when making tea. The water was pure and sweet, and therefore could be considered to be of high quality. However, even since he had been to the spiritual land in Green Peak, he found a water source of even higher quality.

The water used this time was the spiritual spring water which he had gotten on the way when he collected the spiritual fertiliser.

Since the water originated from a spiritual land, the quality of it would naturally be higher than other normal mountain spring water.

Good water would have to be matched with a good tea set for making good tea.

Fang Yuan was using Master Wenxin's precious tea set, which was also considered a good set.

The spiritual tea made was already extraordinary on its own, and now paired with Fang Yuan's meditative tea ceremony.....

The Flower Fox Ferret was staring at the spiritual tea as the last step of the ceremony was completed.

"Try it!"

Fang Yuan served the spiritual tea to the Flower Fox Ferret.

"Keke!"

The Flower Fox Ferret brought its paws together, crossed its knees and sat down to enjoy its tea. It carefully licked the tea with its small tongue and was contented.

Even though Fang Yuan had already known the effects of the

spiritual tea, he was still surprised after seeing the Flower Fox Ferret's expression.

"Achieving a pure and sincere heart was the key to meditation, only then can one purify one's mind and live without worries or anger, beyond life and death....."

He recited a few scriptures in his heart and his eyes glittered. This was the effect of spiritual tea clearing one's mind.

At that moment, he took another sip.

"Oooo...."

As the spiritual tea entered his stomach, a great sensation rushed in like waves in a storm.

Fang Yuan gazed; he did not know where he was.

A long time had passed and he finished the whole pot of tea unknowingly. Tears flowed down his cheeks.

"I had thought that it was bullshit when others said that a flower could represent the world and a blade of grass could represent the heavens. But now.... A cup of tea just changed my perspective on my life?"

Fang Yuan wiped his tears and remained silent for a while.

He felt as though he was reborn once more after drinking the spiritual tea.

It was easy to be reborn physically. However, how difficult would it be to be reborn mentally?

He could do it with the spiritual tea!

After a long while, he looked at his stats window:

"Name: Fang Yuan

Essence: 2.7

Spirit: 2.6

Magic: 2.0

Age: 18

Cultivation: [Martial Artist (5th Gate)]

Technique: [Black Sand Palm (Grade 5)], [Eagle Claw Iron Skin Technique (Grade 5)]

Skill: [Medicine (Level 2)], [Botany (Level 3)]"

"Ssss...."

Fang Yuan breathed in. "My magic has increased by 30%. Could it be due to the effect of the spiritual tea? No....or could it be due to my previous epiphany?"

Right after he consumed the spiritual tea from the meditative tea ceremony, he entered a strange but magical state, which made him felt as if he relived his whole life again.

Such a state was considered rare and precious. One such opportunity allowed his magic to increase by 0.5!

"I'm afraid that no other heavenly treasures can have the same benefits, right?"

Fang Yuan inhaled a long breath. He could feel the inner power bubbling vigorously in his lower abdomen. The inner power from the Grade 5 Eagle Claw Iron Skin Technique surged forth violently on its own and reached the bottleneck of the 6th Grade!

"Is this....what many martial artists have been wishing for....to attain a new grade naturally?"

Fang Yuan was surprised and immediately sat down. He ordered the Flower Fox Ferret to watch over him and then closed his eyes.

When a martial artist attempts to break through his current grade to attain new grade, it would most of the time be consciously using his inner power to break through, which was arduous.

However, there was another way to break through. One would be

able to break through his current grade naturally if his inner power was strong enough. His inner power would automatically be adjusted to work in his new grade, allowing him to execute his techniques naturally.

The success rate was nearly 100%!

.....

At the same time, back in the Spirit Returning Sect.

"Sister Leiyue, please have some spiritual porridge!"

A female disciple carefully brought a wooden tray into the room. There was a bowl of Vermillion Jade Porridge on the tray.

She could not resist the aroma from the bowl of porridge.

"The Sect Head knows that you are about to break through to a new gate and she specially left a portion of hers for you! The portion is enough for 7 days and every meal will be spiritual rice."

The disciple swallowed her saliva and added. She was envious of Leiyue.

"Please help me to thank the Sect Head. You may leave now. I will be undergoing closed door cultivation. You will not have to come and attend to me other than when it's meal time from now onwards!"

Lin Leiyue stroked her hair.

Everyone in the sect had their own amount of spiritual rice and even Shi Yutong did not dare to change her portion.

However, since Shi Yutong knew that Lin Leiyue was about to break through the Gate, she gave her a portion of her spiritual rice as a form of support.

If Fang Yuan, nope, if the Flower Fox Ferret was here, it would not resist its temptations and would start consuming the spiritual porridge.

There was too much water, and too little spiritual rice when cooking the porridge. Of course, most importantly, the grain size of this spiritual rice was way smaller as compared to Fang Yuan's homegrown Vermillion Jade Rice grains.

However, in Lin Leiyue's opinion, isn't this how spiritual rice should be?

She could feel a warm sensation after consuming the spiritual porridge and her inner power started to surge.

"Let's start!"

Lin Leiyue closed all 4 doors and began the process of breaking through.

Every gate would become increasingly difficult! The 6th gate was the first of the 3 Perilous Gates. Once she had broken through those gates, her inner power would be fused into inner force!

Of course, if she failed, she would get injured badly.

This gate marked the difference between a real expert in martial arts and a normal martial artist. In the Spirit Returning Sect, a [Martial Artist (6th Gate)] would be capable enough to hold a senior position and repress anyone!

"I possess the Spiritual Moon Body and consumed the Frozen Moon Pill. I am quite confident since I fought against Song Zhong previously!"

Lin Leiyue clenched her fists and said, "With the help of the spiritual rice, I will be successful in breaking through!"

She crossed her knees and sat down. She regulated her vigorous inner power and began the process of breaking through.

"Bang!"

She sent her first wave of her inner power but was unable to break through the gate.

Lin Leiyue expected this to happen as breaking through the 3

Perilous Gates was not an easy task. She would consider herself to have failed only when she had exhausted her inner power.

Time passed quickly.

Lin Leiyue seemed to have forgotten how much time had passed.

In her body, her vigorous inner power was about to be exhausted and she was very close to breaking through the 6th gate.

There was only a straw left that could break the balance between the two.

"I cannot lose. I still want to see the outside world.....I want to surpass....Fang Yuan!"

While she was still conscious, a figure of a young man appeared in front of her. The figure was gigantic and shrouded her.

"Puff!"

She fiercely opened her eyes and spat a mouthful of blood.

She suffered a backlash after failing to break through the Pain Gate!

Chapter 42: Sixth Gate

"What's the matter? Leiyue?"

"Ping!"

The door broke, as Shi Yutong entered. It was obvious that she was observing outside all along.

"Didn't you say you had 70 to 80 percent chance of succeeding? Why did you fail?"

She held onto Lin Leiyue's right hand, transferring her Wu Zong elemental force. Lin Leiyue's skin became flushed. "Mas... Master?"

"Eh... You foolish girl!"

Shi Yutong heaved a sigh of relief. "Luckily you previously took the Frozen Moon Pill which protected your meridians from being damaged... You were too rash this time!"

"I'm sorry..."

Lin Leiyue winced, unable to tell the truth.

The only thing she was clear on, was that the young man's shadow would be her motivation to break through the next gate.

If she could not break through this mental barrier of hers, it would be increasingly difficult for her to improve. Even with the help of spiritual pills, the improvements would be minimal.

...

Within the secluded valley.

Fang Yuan opened his eyes and appeared joyful.

"The 6th Gate of Martial Arts, the Pain Gate, is finally broken through!"

He sighed for a moment, approached an old tree, focused his inner force on his palm, and struck towards the tree trunk.

Ka!

A distinct sound was heard, as though something broke.

When Fang Yuan took his palm away, a distinct palm shape appeared on the tree trunk. Not only that, in the middle of the palm print were many tiny holes, with wood shavings falling out of them.

"Inner power and inner force are two different things. If the former is likened to a cotton thread, the latter will be likened to a steel wire!"

Fang Yuan took in a deep breath and knew that it was his luck that he could kill Song Zhong.

"The difference between Pain Gate and the previous 5 Gates is too large!"

He clenched his fist and felt the inner force building up within him. He looked at his stats window, and observed a drastic change:

"Name: Fang Yuan

Essence: 3.3

Spirit: 3.2

Magic: 2.0

Age: 18

Cultivation: [Martial Artist (6th Gate)]

Technique: [Black Sand Palm (Grade 5)], [Eagle Claw Iron Skin Technique (Grade 6)]

Skill: [Medicine (Level 2)], [Botany (Level 3)]"

"Eagle Claw Iron Skin Technique----- A combination of inner and external techniques, the technique, when mastered, would be similar to coating the entire body with iron, making it impenetrable by fire and water, as well as making the body difficult to wound. At the current 6th Grade, defence is enhanced!

Eagle Claw's inner strength is enhanced!"

"[Eagle Claw Technique (Grade 6)] enhances Eagle Claw's inner strength! Strengthens defence!"

The inner strength within Fang Yuan was something he had experimented on before, but for an increase in defence capabilities?

He mulled for a moment and dispersed his inner strength to every part of his body beneath his skin.

"Shing!"

In a moment, his skin tightened and became metallic in colour. His inner strength circulated under his skin within him, like an armour.

"With this defence, I can go head-on against any normal swords or knives..."

Fang Yuan was impressed. "Such a shocking improvement in defence and attack! After breaking through the 6th Gate, I now have inner force, and am indeed very different from a normal martial artist!"

With his improvement, he began to think of dealing with the spiritual birds at Green Peak.

"With my skills, if those Red-eyed White Birds dare to fight me, regardless whether they are normal or spiritual they shouldn't pose any problem. As for the leader, the large eagle, there might still be a little trouble!"

Fang Yuan was longing for the spiritual land at Green Peak, in the depths of the Clear Spirit Mountain.

He could not stand how every time he had to scavenge the place for loot and deal with the numerous spiritual bird's attempt at stopping him.

"The spiritual land at the Green Peak is a good place to set up a

campsite, and the earlier we leave for it the better!"

Only spiritual lands were best suited to grow spiritual plants.

As of now, Fang Yuan depended on his botany ability to cultivate spiritual plants, but the amount of effort he put in and the lack of a suitable plot of land was always a pity.

And it was not the safest place.

Therefore, it was a must to get rid of the Red-eyed White Birds and take over Green Peak spiritual land.

"At most, I shall fight with all my might against those white birds. I can kill some every day, and we shall see if they can breed faster than I can kill them!"

Fang Yuan revealed a sinister look on his face.

...

Within the mountains, it was confined, and unknowingly, ten days had passed.

The people of Qingye City began to return to their homes, after being chased away in fear of being killed by Song Zhong. It was as though everything began to revert back to the peace it had before.

As for Zhou Family, which was almost wiped out, they were beginning to be forgotten.

The influence that the Zhou Family once had was slowly being taken over by other families, and one of the main contenders was the Lin Family.

One fine day at Qingye City.

A young man entered the city, and nostalgia was written all over his face. "Qingye City is still as happening as before!"

It was Fang Yuan.

He spent his time cultivating more Vermilion Jade Rice, drank spiritual tea for every meal, and waited at the outskirts of the

Green Peak spiritual land, waiting for his chance to deal with the Red-eyed White Birds.

[Eagle Claw Iron Skin Technique (Grade 6)] was impressive. He did not have to care when the Red-eyed White Birds flew and pecked at him, unless if they were pecking at the vital points on his body.

Using this special ability, he killed many Red-eyed White Birds and hid in the fog if he encountered the spiritual bird's nest. Every day he survived on bird's meat, spiritual tea and spiritual water. As for his martial arts and foundation, there were gradual improvements.

The flock of birds were observed to decrease in size as days go by.

Against a cunning Fang Yuan, the Red-eyed White Birds might even migrate to another place.

However, for now, Fang Yuan's focus slowly shifted to the Vermilion Jade Rice farm.

He faced a huge problem. He was running low on realgar powder, an important ingredient of the Still Fire Liquid...

Even though he stored up large quantities of it previously, the farm did consume a lot of Still Fire Liquid, and the expansion of his production would naturally lead to this outcome.

With this problem, no matter how unwilling Fang Yuan was, he had to leave to get more realgar powder, unless he wanted to witness the demise of his farm.

Secondly, he did not dare to push the flock of Red-eyed White Birds too much.

After his massacre, the remaining Red-eyed White Birds were especially fierce and cunning. When they encounter danger they would immediately squawk for help, and catch the attention of the flock and the bird king.

There was once when Fang Yuan failed to escape and was pecked by a furious bird flock. He sustained many wounds on his back and with much effort escaped alive.

After getting rid of the old, weak, sick and disabled birds, the remaining were tough fighters.

He did not want to push them too much, as those spiritual beasts had the wisdom of humans. If they were desperate, they might destroy the spiritual land, and it was an outcome Fang Yuan had to avoid at all costs.

"Shopkeeper! Give me 40 pounds of the best quality realgar powder! I want the best!"

It was the same shop as before, and Fang Yuan exclaimed the moment he entered the shop, as though he was an uncivilised and aggressive customer.

He earned quite a bit from his previous trip to the county, and a little money did not bother him.

"40 pounds?!"

The shopkeeper, who was originally smiling, appeared shocked. "This amount is too much, we only have 20 pounds here..."

"If that's the case, I'll have them all!"

Fang Yuan waved his hand proudly and was prepared to wipe out stock from the next shop.

"Yes of course..."

The shopkeeper looked down, chased his subordinates away and personally packed the realgar powder. Out of a sudden, he smiled and asked, "Eh? Have we met before, brother?"

He felt a sense of familiarity as he saw the young man.

"Yes! The previous time, I also bought realgar powder from this shop!"

Being a [Martial Artist (6th Gate)], Fang Yuan had little considerations and became more direct.

"Previous time, realgar powder! I remember it now, you were the one who sold the red ginseng, but the Zhou Family took it!"

The shopkeeper thanked Fang Yuan.

"That's right!"

Fang Yuan took the package over, and asked, "I've heard that something big happened in the county town, how's the Zhou Family doing?"

"Sigh..."

The shopkeeper shook his head. "What else? The servants were either killed or have run away, their shop taken over, and their residence has become a gathering place for beggars. What a pity, for Old Zhou's efforts to start the family business, and now it has all been completely destroyed..."

Fang Yuan remained speechless.

In the Zhou Family, Zhou Wenwu was still alive, and since Spirit Returning Sect was willing to punish Song Zhong, it seemed that there was a conclusion to the whole episode.

To regain the Zhou Family's reputation in Qingye City would not be easy. Even if Zhou Wenwu returned, he could only do so much, and could never hope for the Sect to help him, for the Sect was not a charity organisation.

"Who has the biggest clout in Qingye City now?"

Fang Yuan probed further.

"No doubt it would be the Lin Family, as Old Lin had a good daughter... Following, it would be Zhang Family, Guo Family, and all these are newly-built families..."

In reality, these two families were initially small families in Qingye City.

As their opportunity arrived, they rose to power and could be said to have leeches on Zhou Family's influence.

Those who win would rule, and those who lose would become beggars. Even though it was just a small city, it was like a bloodshed competition.

'Looking at things now, it would be extremely difficult for Zhou Wenwu to start all over again, but then again, none of this is my business...'

Fang Yuan shook his head, slowly walked out of the shop and disappeared into the crowd.

The shopkeeper looked at his silhouette, shocked.

...

"Master would like to purchase some realgar powder?"

"That's right!"

Fang Yuan explored the city, and as he was preparing to buy some provisions, several people appeared before him.

These few people wore uniforms and seemed to come from the same origin. All of them looked proud as they smiled, and the strongest among them appeared to be a [Martial Artist (3rd Gate)].

"I am Zhang Han, and my family has long heard of master's name, and want to make friends with you, master! This is a small gift, please accept it!"

Zhang Han waved his hands, and several servants carried a delicate box. Opening the box revealed top-quality realgar powder, and another box glittered, as it contained 2 rows of small silver ingots.

Chapter 43: Fawn

A silver flash.

Two neat rows of silver ingots were so heavy the servant carrying it felt numbness in his hands.

Fang Yuan ignored the ingots, as compared to gold and silver, he preferred the box of realgar powder.

"Zhang Han? You're from the Zhang Family?"

He looked at their leader and had a mischievous look in his eyes. "Do you recognise me?"

He knew that it was probably the shopkeeper who told the Zhang Family about him, and the Zhang Family's influence was indeed strong; they could prepare the silver ingots and realgar powder in such a short period of time and even locate Fang Yuan to present him these gifts.

The new families within Qingye City were indeed capable.

"I do... Master Fang with magical healing abilities that saved Master Zhou from the brink of death, you are indeed the God of Medicine!"

Zhang Han smiled.

The news which actually shocked them was how Fang Yuan defeated Song Zhong in the county.

Elder Song was the God of Killing in the eyes of those in Qingye City.

So what if the Zhou Family was the strongest family in the city? So what if Master Zhou was the deacon of Spirit Returning Sect? If Song Zhong wanted the family to perish then they shall go!

But even the unruly Song Zhong died in the hands of Fang Yuan, so who would dare to offend him? Whoever wanted to survive in Qingye City would have to suck up to him.

'Based on my master's predictions, this person is probably a skilled martial artist who can harness inner force, but he is so young...'

Zhang Han looked at Fang Yuan's face with admiration.

"I did not do anything to deserve this!"

Fang Yuan waved his hand to reject. "I cannot accept all these gifts!"

"Master is unsatisfied? Just tell us what you want, we will make it happen!"

Seeing Fang Yuan's rejection, Zhang Han became anxious. After all, he was tasked by his family to make friends with this highly skilled doctor.

"I'm serious!"

Fang Yuan replied in a serious tone.

Since living with Master Wenxin in the Secluded Valley, both of them had weird temperaments.

Whatever they wanted, they would get for themselves, or trade with others, but they never received offerings from others.

Based on Master Wenxin's explanation, it was hard to repay the favour if they accepted the gifts.

Thinking about it, only Old Tian, Minister Lin and a few other lucky ones had better relationships with the Secluded Valley and Fang Yuan only traded with them.

"Leave!"

Fang Yuan waved his hands.

"Master..."

Zhang Han bit his lips. In front of this young man, he felt pressured, and could not retaliate. He had no choice but to bring his servants back.

"If I accept rewards without doing deeds, I am no different from a thief!"

Fang Yuan looked at their silhouette and shook his head.

Unknowingly, he became the strongest influence within Qingye City.

After all, Old Zhou of the Zhou Family only broke through the 5th Gate and was a deacon of the Spirit Returning Sect, but that was all.

"Zhang Family, Guo Family were new families in the region, and they must have a few [Martial Artist (4th/5th Gate)]... Lin Family is even worse, as they only earned their reputation through Lin Leiyue in the Spirit Returning Sect..."

Fang Yuan thought for a while and became speechless.

A tiny Qingye City gave him a feeling that there were no true heroes, but many small contenders who fought for power.

"The world is huge, and Qingye City is too small. It's like the outskirts of the outskirts... Even the entire Qinghe County was just a small secluded place..."

Fang Yuan was resolute on his viewpoint.

'After I have trained hard enough, I must explore the world and see for myself the wonders around the world!'

'Of course, I'll have to take it step by step, and now, the most important is for me to break through the 3 Perilous Gates!'

The 7th Gate was the Shock Gate. After breaking through it, he would reach where Song Zhong once achieved.

Fang Yuan was extremely confident of himself.

"Shock Gate oh Shock Gate, harming the essence and manipulating the magic... This should be a test of a martial artists' magic level! With the help of the Questioning Heart Tea and the Meditative Tea Ceremony, I am unafraid of this perilous gate..."

"And as for the 8th Gate, the Death Gate, If I don't succeed, I will die. It is closely related to a martial artist's' Essence, Spirit and Magic points. My guess is that the higher one's stats are, the greater the possibility of breaking through!"

Fang Yuan was extremely clear about the first 8 Gates and had no other doubts.

"If I break through the Death Gate and enter the 4 Heavenly Gates, I can indeed have my own way around Qinghe County. As for the Spirit Returning Sect, even the elders will have to make way for me!"

In the 12 Golden Gates, the 4 Heavenly Gates would come after the first 8 Gates!

Martial artists with such a cultivation level were among the strongest in the region and had the ability to start their own small clan. Even within Spirit Returning Sect, they could start a clan and create trouble.

"Under my care, the Flower Fox Ferret should be on par with [Martial Artists (7th/8th Gate)], similar to that of the red-eyed white birds. As for the bird king, its ability should be comparable to the ability of a martial artist in the 4 Heavenly Gates..."

Thinking of those spiritual beasts, Fang Yuan became vexed.

Without getting rid of all the red-eyed white birds, how could he take over Green Peak spiritual land?

As for the spiritual fertilizer, its magical capabilities would only increase after a long time, and new produce would not have much use. After taking over the spiritual land, those new produce would be able to aid the spiritual plants in their growth.

However, he did not know if there could be an even greater danger than the red-eyed white birds, lurking within the spiritual land.

'But this makes things interesting... Right?'

Fang Yuan touched his chin and realised the change in his personality since he first took up martial arts.

It was as though he had a new passion, and thirst for more?

'It seems that martial arts can mould one's character and is more beneficial than it may seem. After killing Song Zhong, my thought processes have become smoother and clearer. It seems like even my personality has become more active?'

Fang Yuan thought about it as he walked around a few shops to get more realgar powder, as he managed to fill his entire bamboo basket with it. He finally reached the entrance of the city.

"Ah! Spare my life! Spare my life!"

A crowd formed at the entrance, and screams were heard, which piqued Fang Yuan's curiosity.

He became even more surprised as he went up.

"Isn't he the shopkeeper from the provision shop? Why is he here? And who are those around him..."

Fang Yuan saw a flash as he witnessed the scene before him.

In the scene, the plump shopkeeper was lying on the floor, his face swollen and not many of his teeth were left. One of his legs was fractured and he was pitiful.

Two servants were around him holding whips and staring at him. The occasional whipping made the shopkeeper let out a cry of pain.

These two servants wore the same attire as Zhang Han.

"It's a... pity..."

Fang Yuan witnessed the scene but did not feel good about it. Instead, he shook his head, turned around and prepared to leave.

He knew that his previous rejection on Zhang Han's offer led Zhang Han to capture the shopkeeper who betrayed him, just so he

could whip him in front of a crowd, just to let off steam and to let Fang Yuan see it for himself.

This was the sad thing about being servants, because if the owner wanted them to hit, they had to obey, and for no good reason they could be killed if the owner wanted them to!

"Doctor Fang!"

At the outskirts of the city, Zhang Han was waiting for him. "Are you satisfied?"

"The shopkeeper, is he one of yours?"

Fang Yuan showed no expression and asked.

"No, he was leaning towards the Zhou Family, but now he wants to lean towards my Family, he's just like a wild grass!"

Zhang Han shook his head and seemed unhappy. "Since he offended the God of Medicine, the previous beating was deserving..."

"Forget about it, it was just a small matter!"

Fang Yuan knew that if he did show his intentions, then Zhang Han might just let the plump shopkeeper 'disappear'.

What good did he gain from doing all that?

At the same time, he looked at Zhang Han and felt sorry for him.

Zhang Han appeared happy, but he would be dealt with the same way the shopkeeper was dealt with.

The head of the Zhang Family did not see to things himself but tasked Zhang Han to do it. Weren't his intentions obvious enough? He would rather be safe than sorry!

If Zhang Han succeeded, it would be a celebration.

If he angered Fang Yuan, he would be the one getting the beating and be taken as the sacrificial lamb.

"I have duly noted the Zhang Family's good intentions!"

Fang Yuan waved his hands and walked away. "I am an uncultured person who lives in the mountains, and I am not willing to be entangled with the affairs of the city. Your family can be assured of that!"

Zhang Han bowed with respect and looked as Fang Yuan walked away.

When Fang Yuan first spoke, he was just nearby, but at his last word, his silhouette could no longer be seen. Such lightness skill and inner power were of a totally different level.

"Could it be... really... inner force!?"

He was shocked, as his hair stood on its ends. He finally knew why the He Family wanted to suck up to him as much as possible.

Previously, Song Zhong could massacre the entire Qingye City, imagine what could this master do?

The only difference Fang Yuan had with Song Zhong was age. In the future, he could continually improve and enter realms he never thought was possible.

Zhang Han knew he couldn't, but couldn't help it but became jealous of Fang Yuan.

"Alright, everyone is dismissed!"

Zhang Han came to the crowd, dispersed the observers, and ordered the two servants to stop. He supported a weak shopkeeper up.

"Master Han... Spare... Spare my life, I shall not dare to do it again..."

The shopkeeper continued to wail, and those who hear and witnessed the scene would feel sad for him.

"Mm... You were not wrong to be loyal to my family, the only wrong you did was to offend that master..."

Zhang Han walked up and gently patted the cheeks of the

shopkeeper.

"Of course, The Zhang Family knows how to distinguish punishment from reward! Just now, it was punishment, and now these are the rewards!"

He whipped out a cheque and waved it in front of the shopkeeper.

"Here you go, you can do anything you like from now onwards, even if it's to seek me for revenge, please go ahead, do you understand?"

"I don't dare! I won't dare!"

The shopkeeper wailed, looked at the bank cheque and was too confused to say anything at that moment.

Chapter 44: The Stalker

"After the downfall of the Zhou Family, two families rose to power, the Zhang Family, and the Guo Family... I've heard of the Zhang Family before, and they used to have some popularity before. This time, they only brought out a small part of their savings... The actions of Zhang Han revealed how scheming the Zhang Family was... And as for the Guo Family, their influence had been growing, but it remained unclear as to how they did it."

Within the forest.

Fang Yuan was sprinting, and at the same time, his thoughts ran through his mind.

After breaking the 6th Gate, and with the birth of inner strength in his Eagle Claws, every aspect of him improved.

For instance, he could naturally concentrate his inner strength to his legs and ran faster than the average person. This was not lightness skill but was the simplest use of inner force.

With the help of his inner strength, Fang Yuan could traverse the forest as though there were nothing.

"Eh?"

As he approached the entrance to the valley, he realised a black figure kneeling down.

"Master Zhou, what's the matter?"

Fang Yuan went up to him and saw his shaggy look. It was a young man, and if it wasn't Zhou Wenwu, who else could it be?

"Doctor Fang? You... You are not in the valley?"

After seeing Fang Yuan, Zhou Wenwu's eyes lit up and gave him a kowtow. His forehead was bleeding profusely. "Thank you, master, for taking revenge on behalf of my family!"

The destruction of the Zhou Family was entirely due to Song

Zhong.

Fang Yuan saved Zhou Wenwu's life before and even escorted him to Qinghe County to testify against Song Zhong. In the end, he even killed Song Zhong.

Fang Yuan earned his respects.

He frowned and left Zhou Wenwu alone. "Let's forget about what happened in the past, what plans do you have for the future?"

"I shall not hide my plans!"

Zhou Wenwu straightened his back and showed a stubborn look. "I am useless, but the sect has decided to pass on my father's role of a deacon to me!"

In actual fact, Zhou Wenwu's was much less skilful than Zhou Tong, but this was the Sect's way of compensating for his loss.

"I have decided to return to Qingye City!"

Zhou Wenwu clenched his fist. "I must rebuild my family's business here!"

"I see!"

Fang Yuan nodded his head, as this move of Zhou Wenwu was good.

The next step would be hard. How would it be possible to get Lin Family, Zhang Family and Guo Family to take a step back for the rise of Zhou Family?

Especially since these few families did gain from the downfall of Zhou Family, and they had their own plans up their sleeves.

Fang Yuan calculated that there wouldn't be much peace in Qingye City from now on.

"Then I shall wish Master Zhou all the best!"

"Ping!"

Zhou Wenwu gave another kowtow. "Master Fang is my

benefactor, and also my family's benefactor! If you need a favour in the future, just inform me and I will see to it, regardless what it takes!"

Fang Yuan smiled. "It's alright, take care Master Zhou, I won't send you off, please return!"

He entered the valley, ignoring Zhou Wenwu.

Seeing Fang Yuan's silhouette disappear, Zhou Wenwu seemed disappointed and continued to kneel.

'Zhou Wenwu... He is indeed sincere!'

Fang Yuan returned to the pavilion, placed his goods, called the Flower Fox Ferret to check on Zhou Wenwu, and then continued to mind his own business.

Zhou Wenwu knew how powerful Fang Yuan was, and therefore did not dare to offend him.

Those words which Zhou Wenwu said actually meant that if one day the Zhou Family rose to power again, they would still be willing to obey Fang Yuan.

"Get help from other influential families? Zhou Family... It seems too big of a price to pay for them to start from scratch."

Fang Yuan shook his head.

He had the ability to help Zhou Family recover, but he felt that it was not worth the effort.

If he really needed the help of influential families, why would he need to look for the Zhou Family?

The Zhang Family seemed impressive, and he could become polite and ask them for help anytime.

"Mmm... After considering all the factors, I have to sacrifice too much, to gain too little. It doesn't make sense!"

Fang Yuan shook his head, continued to prepare his 'Still Fire

Liquid', and took a stroll in his farm.

...

It was dusk.

A chill wind blew across the mountains, and the cold from the icy ground was biting.

Zhou Wenwu stubbornly continued to kneel on the ground, and his mind was lost as he stared at the flickering candle in the valley.

He was confident that by presenting even himself Fang Yuan would help him. However, Fang Yuan totally ignored his nonsense and closed the door on him, his mind set.

Fang Yuan wouldn't frown a bit even if he froze to death out here.

Being a son of the Zhou Family, Zhou Wenwu had the responsibility to carry on the family line, and if he really died kneeling out here, he would cease the family line.

The moon slowly rose higher and higher.

Zhou Wenwen took a long sigh as his entire body became stiff. After a long while, he finally stood up, gazed at the Secluded Valley for a long while, before taking his leave by limping towards the forest.

What he didn't know was that two men in black were observing him the whole while within the bushes nearby.

"Hey, he is just one person himself, how can he rebuild his family? Does he not know that the Zhou Family is history now?"

"Although the Zhou Family is destroyed, it only took a short span of a few weeks, and many relationships were established from the incident, especially how the Sect still acknowledged the family is one of their own, and that is the crucial part!"

The other person rebutted. "If they are not afraid of the Zhou Family's comeback, then why would master send us out to spy on

him?"

"You're right about that too, but I'm wondering why can't we take things into our own hands and settle him once and for all in the forest!"

The first guy had a malicious look in his eyes.

"Are you crazy?"

The other man in black was shocked. "This person is now the deacon of Spirit Returning Sect. Even Song Zhong couldn't cover up the death of Zhou Tong, and he himself died in the end. Do you think you are more capable than Song Zhong? And you still want to kill another one?"

When he said this, the other guy remained speechless.

After half a day, he said, "We were lucky the owner of the valley did not promise to help him, otherwise, by his reputation and ability, our Guo Family will be in trouble."

"That's right... Zhang Family's actions were a joke. He is just an ordinary doctor with little martial arts, and they gave him so much respect, what a joke!"

"He was after all from a business family, and all they talk about is having peace and prosperity. But our family is different! We are based on our skilled martial arts! Every child at the age of 9 in our family will have to start picking up martial arts, and we have quite a number of Martial Artist in the 4th or 5th Gate. In addition... We still have Old Master!"

At the last few words, both of them softened, and they appeared respectful.

"As long as Old Master is around, our Guo Family will rise and become the number one family in Qingye City, or even number one in Jinjun County!"

"Hmph, if we were not that afraid of being at the top, our family

could have ruled over Qingye City easily!"

The man in black announced proudly.

"There are many powerful people in the martial arts world, Take for example this secluded valley, once it was Master Wenxin, and now Doctor Fang Yuan with impeccable healing powers and unparalleled martial arts. If we treat him as our enemy, it would be a large obstacle for our family to progress!"

The other person sighed, and both men in black looked at each other, both wanting to find out how powerful he was. "Why not... Let's test him out first?"

Although it was just a thought, they unknowingly took a step forward.

"Both of us are going to ambush him, and since both of us are strong martial artists who have broken through the 2 Peaceful Gates, surely we can escape if we are no match for him..."

"Whoosh!"

Two shadows entered the valley and arrived at the pavilion.

'This legendary Secluded Valley looks normal...'

One of them appeared unsatisfied and mumbled under his breath.

The moment he spoke, a white flash appeared in front of them.

"Sssss!"

"Ahhh!"

A piercing scream was heard and echoed throughout the valley.

"What is this... creature!"

The other man in black retreated quickly, as he saw his companion fall to the floor with an arm detached, as blood spurted out.

"Hisss!"

In front of them was a white and large dog... white ferret?

"Mutated... Mutated beast?!"

The voice of the man in black trembled, as though he regretted his actions.

'The valley is indeed mysterious and scary, as they have a mutated beast to look after the living quarters?'

On the other hand, the Flower Fox Ferret was calmly stroking its own fur, and from time to time made some noise.

"Chiya!"

The door to the pavilion opened, and as Fang Yuan yawned he looked at both of the men in black. "More spies? I think my luck isn't too good these few days... I must warn those who might possibly do foolish things again, otherwise, it will be rather troublesome for me..."

"You are Fang Yuan!"

One of them said, "Why did you let the beast attack us?"

"Attack you? Haha..."

Fang Yuan laughed as though he had heard a good joke. "You two trespassed my valley, with ill intentions, and yet you dare accuse me? Both of you are indeed idi*ts!"

"Idi*ts?"

Both men in black looked at each other and did not quite seem to understand, but knew it should not be something good. Both of them stared fiercely at Fang Yuan.

They knew that the white ferret was extremely fast and they could never outrun it if they attempted to escape to the forest.

The only way out was to defeat its owner, Fang Yuan!

Even though they have heard of Fang Yuan's heroics, they have not personally seen it before and had a glimmer of hope in

defeating him.

"To stay alive, it seems I have to personally fight my way out!"

Fang Yuan did not take them seriously. "Come, don't complain that I didn't give you the chance to strike first!"

"Kill!"

Both guys looked at each other as both of them, even the one with a broken arm, shouted and pounced upon him. His legs struck rapidly, so quick that there wasn't any shadow.

"Ferocious Tiger Palm!"

"Shadowless Legs!"

...

Palms and kicks flew in quick succession, but Fang Yuan did not dodge. He took in a deep breath, and his skin became a greenish-black.

"Ping! Ping!"

It was like raindrops hitting a banana leaf, continuous and distinct.

When everything was over, and both of them were exhausted, they were surprised to see Fang Yuan still standing. Fear was written all over their faces. "Eagle Claw Iron Skin Technique at Grade 6 - A professional!!! Who knew such a level could be attained?"

Chapter 45: Infiltrate

In the early morning, Fang Yuan put on rough clothing and tended to his garden leisurely.

No one would imagine that beneath this garden, there were 2 martial artist's bodies used as fertilizer!

"What about the Guo Family?"

Fang Yuan thought as he dug the ground.

The two men were not his match and were easily defeated. After another round of beating and using of drugs to threaten them, the two men spilt everything out.

The Guo Family was different from well-known Zhang Family. The Guo family was relatively unknown except for being a tyrant in a local village. They were able to bring down many from the Zhou Family due to their ruthlessness and their martial arts skills..."

Not even the Lin Family would provoke such a rabid family.

Fang Yuan was unhappy.

"Perhaps I should also discourage people from coming to me"

Fang Yuan thought.

He had been in the limelight previously. Now, everyone in the Qingye City knew about a Doctor Fang who could work miracles and was highly skilled in martial arts.

Fang Yuan wondered if he would still be able to tend to his field if people were to keep paying him visits to further their own agendas. He would also not be able to tend to his field if the Guo Family kept snooping around.

Fang Yuan took no notice of such a small family even if they had individuals that were highly skilled, as it was not an issue.

They did not cause much trouble when Zhou Tong was in charge which proved that they were nothing to be afraid of.

Of course, Fang Yuan felt that it was best to improve himself so as to have more confidence.

Fang Yuan blinked and the stats window appeared before his eyes:

"Name: Fang Yuan

Essence: 3.5

Spirit: 3.4

Magic: 2.2

Age: 18

Cultivation: [Martial Artist (6th Gate)]

Technique: [Black Sand Palm (Grade 5)], [Eagle Claw Iron Skin Technique (Grade 6)]

Skill: [Medicine (Level 2)], [Botany (Level 3)]"

...

"Ever since I obtained inner power, it has stimulated my spirit and essence to rise significantly. Could my solid foundation be the reason for the massive increase in their stats?"

Fang Yuan was vaguely suspicious. A normal 6th Gate Martial Artist would not be able to improve as much as him.

As for the increase in magic, it could be attributed solely to the effects of the Questioning Heart Tea.

Fang Yuan shared the tea with the Flower Fox Ferret once a day. While the effect of the tea was not as great as when he first drank the tea, he was satisfied with the constant increase in magic.

Overcoming the Shock Gate, the 7th Gate of the 12 Golden Gates, would test the magical energy of the martial artist.

At his current standard, he was 60% to 70% confident of overcoming the Shock Gate if he practised his Eagle Claw Iron Skin Technique enough!

Given such a success rate, it would shock many. Even Wu Zong Shi Yutong would be tongue-tied.

"Flower Fox Ferret, go and fetch the Still Fire Liquid!"

After much consideration, Fang Yuan fetched a few bamboo canteens.

The Flower Fox Ferret received the bamboo canteens and vanished in a puff of smoke. It was very different from the past.

"The Flower Fox Ferret's powers have been steadily increasing as well. It is hardly afraid of the realgar powder now..."

Fang Yuan was astonished after witnessing the sight.

A main component of the Still Fire Liquid was the realgar powder, which used to be the bane of the Flower Fox Ferret. After the Flower Fox Ferret was retrained, it no longer feared the realgar powder and just disliked the smell of it.

After realizing, Fang Yuan experimented multiple times and came to a conclusion that the weakness of the Flower Fox Ferret was slowly diminishing.

"That's right... the spiritual beast needs to grow and might eventually enter the realm of Wu Zong. How could such a big weakness remain?"

Fang Yuan rubbed his chin and guessed that it was either the effect of the spiritual rice and tea or the growth of the Flower Fox Ferret that resulted in the change.

There was not enough information to arrive at a definite conclusion.

"Keke!"

Not long after, the Flower Fox Ferret returned. It looked

expectantly at Fang Yuan.

"You are getting more and more proficient... I know I know, you will get your spiritual tea today..."

Fang Yuan looked at the Flower Fox Ferret and the image of the Flower Fox Ferret passing away one day appeared in his mind. He could not help but feel sad at the thought.

"There is still one more thing!"

He stroked the back of the Flower Fox Ferret, his eyes cold, "I will be going out tonight. I need you to look after the house. Kill any intruders on sight!"

...

Qingye City.

It was a dark and windy night. The crescent moon was covered by a cloud and the horizon was grey and hazy.

"What a fitting night to kill a person!"

Fang Yuan raced off. His speed matched that of a speeding horse and in no time, he arrived at Qingye City.

The city gate was already closed. Fang Yuan could not help but laugh as he looked at the towering, mouldy city wall. He took out a long rope and a few nails and arrived at a corner of the city wall.

"Eagle Claw!"

Power surged into both his hands and he gained enormous strength. He gripped the stone wall and started to climb. Every now and then, he would hammer the nails into the cracks of the wall. These nails acted as footholds for him to climb up further.

When he was halfway up, Fang Yuan threw the rope up. The rope latched onto the stone.

"Woosh!"

With a hard pull, Fang Yuan landed lightly at the top of the city

wall and vanished into the darkness without anyone noticing him.

"Sigh...At my current skill level, I still require the aid of tools. When I have mastered the Lightness Skill, this city wall would be nothing..."

Fang Yuan thought as he swiftly descended from the wall.

He was dressed in black attire and blended in with the darkness. As such, he went unnoticed by the drowsy soldiers guarding the gates.

"Guo Family...Guo Family..."

He knew where the Guo residence was as he had previously come to the city before. He stealthily made his way to the place.

Guo Residence.

The Guo family recently acquired their wealth and as such, their big house still preserved many characteristics that are similar to that found in villages. The house was heavily guarded by servants who were well-built. Even though it was the middle of the night, there were patrols with hounds patrolling the residence.

The Guo Family was first in Qingye City in terms of military might and martial arts skills.

Fang Yuan was unsure if it was the mannerism of the Guo Family or if the Guo Family had too many enemies to warrant such a level of security.

No matter how well-guarded the residence was, the walls of the residence were significantly lower than that of the city wall. Fang Yuan looked for an opening and leapt over the wall.

"Crack!"

Behind the wall was a garden. Fang Yuan landed on the grass which rustled.

He turned and swiftly ran towards the rocks.

"Woof Woof!"

Two well-built servants were patrolling the area with a large hound not far away.

The hound had silky black fur and bloodshot eyes. Its teeth were white and sharp. It stopped in its tracks, looked at the place where Fang Yuan landed and turned to look at the rocks.

"What's wrong, Blackie?"

One of the servants was curious. He released the leash and allowed the hound to move forward.

The hound ran towards the corner of the wall and sniffed the ground before it ran towards the rocks.

The two servants looked at each other, both on alert. One of them reached towards his waist while the other gripped the gong.

"Good beast!"

Fang Yuan saw the hound approaching from his hiding spot. He focused his inner strength in his eyes and glared at the black hound.

In the study of martial arts, there was a saying where those highly-skilled were able to make their enemies cower just by glaring at them without leaving a finger.

Given his current level, Fang Yuan was nowhere near the capabilities of those in the legend. However, his magical energy was higher than that of a normal person and he was up against a simple-minded beast. Hence, he was able to handle the hound.

"Wuwu..."

The black hound shivered as it felt terrified like a lone horse in the wilderness stalked by a predator.

It whimpered before turning around and scampered away from the rocks.

"What's wrong?"

The two servants were confused.

"Could it be that the hound is still hungry? Or that it is lusty? "

The other servant relaxed and joked.

"What lusty? Did you think that everyone is like you, always looking for prostitutes in the street...my Blackie is..."

The servant chided. He stroked the black hound's head and said, "Let's go, our shift is almost over. Let's return to our room, drink some wine and eat some meat..."

"I agree!"

The other servant nodded his head. Both of them walked off.

Fang Yuan waited for the sound of the footsteps to disappear before entering the inner area of the residence.

The courtyard was large and there were many buildings. The residence was built like a maze. Fang Yuan silently cursed himself for making a blunder as he did not gather sufficient information about the residence.

"Most residences are similar. Behind the living room would be the master bedroom..."

Fang Yuan scaled the wall and was elated when he saw a few lights.

Lighting up the lamps were costly. Only the owner could afford to light up the lamps to discuss matters.

As Fang Yuan edged closer, he realized that the security in that area was tighter and knew that he had arrived at the correct place.

An orange light lit up the surrounding. Two shadows could be seen from within the room.

"Father, I was incapable. The seventh and the eighteenth disciples have not returned!"

In the study room, the head of the Guo Family, Guo Jing was grovelling on the ground.

If an outsider were to see this scene, they would be shocked.

When did the hot-tempered and unreasonable head of the Guo Family become more docile and timid than a young rabbit?

"Hmmm?!"

Seated cross-legged on the mat was an old man with white hair and bright eyes. The old man turned his head in such an imposing manner that the room felt like it was struck by lightning. Guo Jing could not help but shrink away.

Chapter 46: Hiding

"What happened, tell me about it!"

Old Master Guo had a loud voice and was very much louder than the average person.

"Yes, Father!"

Guo Jing stood up and bowed. "The only child left of the Zhou Family, Zhou Wenwu, returned to the city. I was worried and therefore sent both my nephews to investigate and stalk him... At first, they relayed a message back to inform us that everything was normal, but when they entered the mountains and head towards the secluded valley, there was no further news."

"The mountains? Secluded valley?"

Old Master Guo looked down, and then said, "The doctor who could work miracles? Fang... Fang..."

"Fang Yuan!"

Guo Jing felt unjust. After all, he lost two martial artists, which was a big deal to the Guo Family, not to mention the kinship they once had.

"After the incident, our people observed Zhou Wenwu returning from the secluded valley, but could not obtain information regarding our 2 brothers, I'm afraid... They're in trouble!"

"Bast*rd"

Old Master Guo raged, and Guo Jing became confused, for he did not know if Old Master was angry at him, Fang Yuan, or his 2 useless grandsons.

"Did those two... ever get involved in any trouble?"

After calming down, Old Master Guo used a soothing voice, as he looked extremely serious.

"Never in their lives!"

Guo Jing shook his head. "This is a grave matter. In the entire household, only you and I know about this, not even the best second brother can know about it!"

"Good!"

Old Master Guo nodded his head but looked lost for the moment. "Since I was 18, I was tasked to infiltrate this place and stay hidden. That was 60 years ago, and finally came the long-awaited orders from the Master. It was the real Master's intention to make this family influential, so as to cover up the activities that we do, and it cannot be taken lightly! As long as we succeed this time, all our disciples will be able to come out of hiding and find the real Master..."

"I understand this!"

Guo Jing nodded his head as the eavesdropping Fang Yuan was shocked.

"After hearing what both of them said, it seems that where the Guo Family came from elsewhere where they were a big power, and are now secretly inserted into Qingye City? No wonder they could become such an influential family from nothing in such a short while, like a burning fire!"

"I am sure that they must have a similar plan in other counties... This was very well thought-out and a very well-kept secret, it is..."

At that moment, it was as though he saw a large and invisible net covering the entire Qinghe County.

The many disciples they had were like many tiny nodes, lying low but would all strike when the command was given.

With that thought, he immediately held his breath, consolidated his magical energy, and focused his attention in the room.

Their conversation was distinctly heard from outside.

"My Father!"

Guo Jing sounded as though he suspected something. "The sect's order for us was to lay low, wasn't it? Why the change?"

"This matter..."

Old Master Guo remained composed. "I've got some insider information. It seems that there was a traitor within the sect who stole an important treasure. He escaped in the direction of Clear Spirit Mountain and was highly likely to reach our vicinity. We could use this opportunity to come out, make use of all the manpower we have and cover up for the highly skilled martial artists that the sect had sent to deal with him. After all, Qinghe County is still within the control of the Spirit Returning Sect, and Shi Yutong's sect is not one to be trifled with...."

"The only problem is... It has been such a long time since the traitor escaped, and he might have already been long gone. The only reason why the sect is doing this is because they have not resigned to fate..."

At this point, Old Master Guo had disappointment written on his face.

On the contrary, Guo Jing looked happy.

Regardless, the Guo Family could take advantage of the situation and make its mark!

"Traitor... treasure..."

"Such a coincidence?"

Fang Yuan became increasingly shocked as he heard on. For a moment he thought of Han Shou, who died under his poisonous palms, and the hidden treasure map within his boots.

The lines on the treasure map were similar to that of a talisman, and it seemed that many details were missing. After trying hard to gather more information about the treasure map, he became

confused himself and decided to give up and shoved it into a corner.

Now it seemed that this item was extremely precious, and the treasure of this strong influence opposing the Spirit Returning Sect! It seemed that they were willing to give up anything for this treasure.

'What a pity, what use would an incomplete map be?'

Fang Yuan shook his head and heard Old Master Guo. "Hmm, secluded valley... Who was Fang Yuan? How dare he touch my people, does he think I'm a weakling? Although we have a short history here, for us to exert our influence, we need to show others that we can fight."

"The news of our two martial artists failing their mission had spread, and as for Fang Yuan, he is already a highly skilled martial artist!"

Guo Jing sounded serious. "Father, although you have trained secretly and are a Martial Artist of the 6th Gate, that young man is younger than you..."

If his father was in his younger days, Guo Jing wouldn't worry for him.

But now, he was close to 80. Even though his inner strength was astounding, how could he match another martial artist of same cultivation level as himself?

"I know, but the people in the Guo Family are not cowards!"

Old Master Guo waved his hand. "Personally lead a troop to the secluded valley and gather information regarding Little Seven and Little Eighteen. If they are alright then escort them back and forget about the incident, but if they have died... Retreat immediately!"

"Retreat immediately!"

"That's right, I will personally inform the Sect Head to inform

him on the suspicious areas of the secluded valley!"

Old Master Guo smirked. "Who asked for the secluded valley to be so deeply hidden within the mountains, so mysterious? Even if the traitor came from there I wouldn't be surprised..."

Guo Jing was surprised.

Although he knew that this was not true and even if the martial artists from the sect knew about this, they would rather kill all those suspicious than let anyone live.

"What a great plan, Father!"

He looked joyful.

Suddenly, he noticed his father frowning, as though he was anxious.

"Pa! Pa!"

At this moment, there was an applause heard from outside, as a man in black entered the room and walked in. "Good plan! Indeed a perfect plan!"

"A martial artist skilled in inner force!?"

Old Master Guo stood up looking angry and pulled Guo Jing behind. "Careful, Guo Jing, I will deal with this!"

He looked at the man in black and was under stress. "May I know who you are, and why did you trespass the Guo Manor?"

"Old Dog, you shall die!"

Fang Yuan did not want to speak a word to the old man. He struck out his right hand and his index finger pointed forward like a sword.

"Chi!"

His arm grew in size, and under his black outfit, his skin became black. Even the centre of his palm had a little black too.

Eagle Claw Iron Skin Technique, Grade 6! And there's Black Sand

Palm too!

Fang Yuan mustered all that he could in one move!

He had to do it. After all, this was the heart of the Guo Family, and Old Master Guo's last sentence was heard loudly, as he did it on purpose to demonstrate his inner force. Footsteps were already heard rushing towards the room.

Even though a martial artist skilled in inner force could easily take out those using inner power, facing a large number of them all at once could still exhaust him out.

Fang Yuan eyes were deadly.

At the moment Old Master Guo outlined the devious plan, he knew that the entire Guo Family had to be destroyed!

"Eagle Claw?!"

Old Master Guo was stressed out. He punched both fists in the air, and mustered all the strength he could, like a giant. "Giant Spiritual Strength!"

"Ping!"

The fists and claws met, and Old Master Guo was forced a few steps back. He unknowingly imprinted his footprint into the ground, as his face reddened. He spat out a large mouthful of blood, but his injury could not compare to his shock. "[Martial Artist (6th Gate)]? How could you have such aggression?"

"Chi!"

Fang Yuan's black outfit was torn, which exposed his pitch-black skin. He quickly recovered from the injury he sustained due to his impressive physical condition and did not even take a step back after the first exchange of fists. He attacked once again like an eagle; his strength on his claws came from his abdomen to his arm, then to his palm, then to his fingertips. A popping sound was heard every time his inner force passed through.

"Die!"

"Eagle Claw Iron Skin Technique!? You are Fang..."

Old Master Guo was even more surprised, but he could not complete his sentence as he received another strike from his opponent.

"Hmph, Spiritual Giant Supporting the Heavens!"

He stretched out both palms and received Fang Yuan's claws that struck from above.

"Ping!"

The man in black could gain the upper hand against Old Master Guo, and from how he was shaking from withstanding Fang Yuan's strikes, he was obviously on the brink of losing!

'Faster! Even faster!'

He clenched his fists and was sweating profusely. He could only wait for reinforcements to arrive.

"You're not too bad, being able to withstand three claws from me!"

Fang Yuan exclaimed and struck another claw out.

"Mmm..."

Old Master Guo became pale and exerted all his strength to hold on to the claws. He felt relieved as he saw his servants arriving to help him.

In a blink of an eye, one claw broke free and went straight for his throat.

"Kacha!"

A distinct sound was heard as the servants entered the room, as they witnessed the scene unfolding right in front of their eyes.

The pillar of support for the Guo Family, the all-mighty Old Master Guo held his neck, fell to the ground and remained

motionless.

"Thief!"

Guo Jing was angered. "I will kill you!"

"Then you shall die too!"

To remove weeds, you need to pluck them from the roots, and Fang Yuan understood this theory.

He rushed forward and struck out his claw at Guo Jing, who was attempting to hide among the crowd.

"I'll fight!"

Guo Jing swept his arms across. After all, he was an able [Martial Artist (5th Gate)].

Despite his attempts to summon forth his inner power, it crumbled upon clashing against Fang Yuan's inner strength.

"Kacha!"

Fang Yuan snapped his neck, not giving him any chances.

All the servants and even the descendants of the Guo Family took a few steps back, all afraid to make any eye contact with this man in black.

Fang Yuan let out a cold laughter, flipped over the manor's wall, and disappeared.

Chapter 47: The Aftermath

Back in the old mansion of Zhou Family.

Ever since the passing of Zhou Tong, the place became like ruins and many beggars came to gather here.

However, when Zhen Wenwu was back, he immediately took the place back under his control and operated it as a base camp.

Zhou Wenwu was wearing a mourning suit and gave his respect to a few tablets that were on the altar with incense. "Father.... don't you worry. I will revive the prestige of the Zhou Family...."

After the ceremony, he opened the door and felt sorrowful as he saw the dilapidated courtyard.

The courtyard looked much more deserted now.

'Minister Lin is an old fox. Even though I'm using the Spirit Returning Sect's name in my favour, he will likely not fall for it. He has stronger backers than me. How about targeting the Zhang and Guo Family? This will not be easy though....'

Zhou Wenwu gazed at the moon with a troubled look.

The Zhang Family did have a strong background and power which they accumulated over the years. Hence, it would not be wise to attack them.

On the other hand, the Guo Family was violent and unruly. One would need assistance to bring them under control.

"Fang Yuan was not willing to lend a helping hand, and a few relatives promised to aid us financially but the fund is still not in yet....ugh, and also my sister! No one knows whether she is dead or alive. This is indeed worrying me...."

Zhou Wenwu sighed and suddenly, his expression changed.

There was a loud and distinct noise coming from the Guo's mansion.

"Something bad happened....to the Guo Family?"

He climbed over the courtyard wall. Lights were shining everywhere and there were many screams and crying. He grew suspicious.

Even though he wanted to find out what was happening, he knew that since the Guo Family was being attacked, they would be on high alert. It was better for him not to bother them right now.

"Or maybe.... This is my chance to...."

Zhou Wenwu gave it a good thought and his eyes glittered. "I'm not sure how is Old Guo now...."

"He is dead!"

A voice was heard from behind, which frightened Zhou Wenwu.

"Are you.... Doctor Fang?"

This voice was very familiar and sounded youthful. Zhou Wenwu was dazed for a moment but was relieved after realising who was it.

However, his expression became serious when he saw Fang Yuan in his night combat outfit.

Fang Yuan was present in the city at this timing and coincidentally, something bad happened to the Guo Family. Could it be....

"You don't have to guess. Old Guo and the homeowner Guo Jing are both dead...."

Fang Yuan spoke in a deep voice.

"Aaahh!"

Even though he had guessed that Fang Yuan was behind it, Zhou Wenwu was still surprised and immediately kowtowed to Fang Yuan. "Thank you for helping me. I will do anything you want me to do...."

Fang Yuan waved and said, "You don't need to thank me. I am

helping you this time because I will need your help in the future!"

In fact, Fang Yuan ambushed the Guo Family to gather more information and to scare them.

However, he changed his plans as he became furious after hearing some secrets. Hence, he killed the father and the son of the Guo Family to get the most out of the operation.

He could say that he was invited by Zhou Wenwu to assist him in taking down the Guo Family. Who else could reveal the truth? Not only did he benefit without costing him anything, he even managed to reap gratitude from Zhou Wenwu.

Most importantly, he gained a new assistant in the city. Zhou Wenwu could help him out and save him a lot of trouble.

"Old Guo is a 6th Gate Martial artist and is indeed an expert in inner force. Guo Jing is a 5th Gate Martial artist..... Both of them are the most highly skilled in the Guo Family. I have removed them for you. Do you know what to do next?"

Fang Yuan glanced at Zhou Wenwu and instructed him.

"Old Guo is a 6th Gate Martial Artist?!"

When Zhou Wenwu heard what Fang Yuan said, he sighed and was relieved that he did not rashly attack the Guo Family on his own. He then looked into Fang Yuan's eyes with respect.

Even an expert in inner force was defeated by him! How did Fang Yuan train his martial arts to such a state?

"Hmm, the rest of the Guo Family that are still alive are easy to deal with. If you can't even handle such loose ends...."

Fang Yuan said in a deep voice.

"If I fail to handle the loose ends, I would strip myself of my martial arts and I would not even think about reviving the Zhou Family anymore!"

Zhou Wenwu patted his chest and seemed confident. He then

added, "What about the Zhang Family?"

"Hmm?"

Fang Yuan turned around and stared at Zhou Wenwu with a serious look.

"I'm thinking too much...."

Zhou Wenwu immediately broke out in cold sweat and started apologising after Fang Yuan stared at him.

"With the current situation of Zhou Family, removing Guo Family will be sufficient. Removing the Zhang Family will be too much!"

Fang Yuan said coldly.

Honestly speaking, the Zhang Family had more situational awareness and hence he had nothing against them.

Furthermore, with the current population of the Zhou Family, it was impossible for the Family to restore its power like before back in Qingye City.

The best outcome was to remove Guo Family for the Zhou Family to take over their assets and coexist with the Zhang and Lin families in a triangulated situation.

Zhou Wenwu should have known these principles but he was too focused on getting revenge and achieving his dream. Now, Fang Yuan reminded him of these principles, which made him admire Fang Yuan even more.

Fang Yuan was not only good in medicine and martial arts but understood the principles behind human relations as well. Was he born smart and talented?

Zhou Wenwu respected Fang Yuan and said, "Thank you for reminding me. I have understood your point."

"Very well, I have a few tasks for you to complete...."

Fang Yuan chuckled.

.....

The news of the Guo Family spread.

The Guo Family left the city the next day and relocated back to their original village. The family couldn't care less about those who plundered them at that time and were extracting their men from Qingye City. This was like a retreat from a losing party.

Looking at how sensible the Guo Family was in deciding to pull out from the city, Zhou Wenwu was satisfied with the number of valuable things that were left behind by the family as it was sufficient for his own needs. He felt that he could gain a foothold in Qingye City again.

This time, he was clear of the situation and secretly gathered enough men to wipe out the entire Guo Family completely.

The Zhou Family needed to be restored from scratch like the Guo Family, and hence one of the families in the city needed to be targeted in order for another family to take over. Guo Family was the best target in the whole of Qingye City.

The Guo Family also realised that without the two highly skilled martial artists in the Family, they were weakened.

During such times, the Lin and Zhang families were getting closer to the Zhou Family and had no intention of helping the Guo Family.

At the same time, everyone knew what the secluded valley was capable of and would, therefore, think twice before attacking the secluded valley....

Of course, Fang Yuan was not really interested in any of these affairs.

Zhou Wenwu would handle the loose ends on his own.

Fang Yuan was already back home in the secluded valley. After

taking a break, he went to the Green Peak with the Flower Fox Ferret.

"Chirp! Chirp!"

A flock of Red-eyed White Birds were flying past and a giant Red-eyed White King Bird was leading the flock.

Fang Yuan hid in the woods and was irritated by their presence.

"These birds are getting more vigilant than before and they are hard to deal with now!"

The presence of these birds was a huge obstacle to his success in claiming this spiritual land. These birds had been giving him huge problems lately.

Notwithstanding anything else, in one instance, when Fang Yuan went to get some spiritual spring water and spiritual fertiliser, he had to be cautious of the Red-eyed White Birds, in case they came out of their nests and attack him. Hence, the amount that he had gotten was not sufficient every time. Sometimes, the Flower Fox Ferret would be surrounded by these birds.

"I will not be able to enjoy collecting the spiritual fertiliser if I don't get rid of them soon....."

Fang Yuan looked at the beach that was beside the Eye's Tear Lake. "Anyway, the longer the spiritual fertiliser is accumulated, the better it is. Also, the storage size of this beach is quite big to store a large amount of the spiritual fertiliser. Maybe I should not get rid of the birds for now first...."

Fang Yuan estimated that the best spiritual fertiliser that could really help in the growth of the spiritual plants would need at least 10 years of accumulation in order to produce such an effect.

With the time, he could make full use of the spiritual land. Wouldn't he be able to grow any kinds of spiritual plants?

"It is just that.....the rest of the Red-eyed White Birds are not a

problem but the Red-eyed White King Bird is hard to deal with....."

Of course, he was gaining little from his hunts recently.

At least the number of the Red-eyed White Birds was decreasing and there were fewer eyes to keep watch over the spiritual land. This gave Fang Yuan many opportunities to secretly enter the spiritual land to obtain the spiritual spring water and other precious spiritual plants.

"Whoosh!"

He went to the other side of the cliff and suddenly hid into a nearby bush.

"A normal Red-eyed White Bird will be dead once it sees me. Even a spiritual bird can only last a little longer....."

Fang Yuan reached the One-eyed Spring and filled his bamboo canteen with the spring water to the brim. "This time....maybe I should trek deeper in!"

In his heart, he already treated the whole Green Peak like his own land.

The spring water brought a cooling effect to the body. After Fang Yuan drank till his heart's content, he felt refreshed and continued to explore the inner parts of the secluded valley with the Flower Fox Ferret.

"Hmm, this spiritual land is definitely incredible....."

Even though he did not find any spiritual plants, there were many flowers blooming and the trees were bearing fruits at this unusual time. This scene filled Fang Yuan with emotions as he felt sorry for these plants.

"Wasted! Totally wasted!"

He looked at a piece of land which was fully grown with weed and felt distressed. "If this piece of land was used to grow spiritual plants, the food produced would be enough to last the both of us

for an entire year. Damn those Red-eyed White Birds...."

He cursed softly.

After all, if he were to raise his voice, he might disturb the spiritual birds and they would come and surround the both of them. By then, they would be in big trouble.

"Logically speaking, this spiritual land in the mountain should have one or two types of spiritual plants growing.....Why are there none?"

As he went in deeper into the mountain, Fang Yuan frowned. He reached a big pit and squatted down. "The spiritual energy is stronger here as compared to the surroundings. Looks like there might be a spiritual object here before, just that it has been removed....."

He sighed and finally knew where the spiritual plants are.

If he was correct, it should be in the nest of the Red-eyed White King Bird!

As a spiritual beast, it would definitely hide the spiritual plants very well like how humans would hide their precious items.

"Hmm?"

At that moment, Fang Yuan's expression changed and hid behind a bush.

"Chirp!"

A black dot from the sky came nearer and nearer along with a deafening cry.

Chapter 48: Bamboo Fruit

"Is that....an eagle?!"

With the black dot getting closer, Fang Yuan realised that the one who made a loud cry was a giant eagle. Its black feathers reflected a metallic colour under the sunlight.

"Spiritual beast! Definitely a spiritual beast!"

This black giant eagle was fast. Just as Fang Yuan lifted up his head, it already flew past the Green Peak and up into the sky.

"This is strange....how have I not seen this eagle before?"

Fang Yuan saw that the flock of Red-eyed White Birds were disturbed and had a suspicion. "Is it because of coincidence or is it because spiritual beasts are coming from elsewhere?"

"Chirp!"

At that moment, the entire flock of the Red-eyed White Birds around the cliff were disturbed. Under the leadership of a few spiritual birds, they circled around in the air in a formation like an army troop.

"Whoosh!"

The giant eagle was not intimidated by the formation created but flew straight into the Red-eyed White Birds.

"Chirp! Chirp!"

Mournful bird chirpings could be heard and big white feathers came falling from the sky.

The claws of the giant eagle were as sharp as a steel hook and the spiritual birds were struggling to avoid the sharp edge of the claws. The giant eagle also used its beak to peck through the head of one of the Red-eyed White Bird, causing the bird to die instantly, its body falling straight down.

"Eagle Claw! This is the real Eagle Claw!"

As Fang Yuan observed the battle of the spiritual birds intently, he felt like he had gained a better understanding of the Eagle Claw Technique.

"Chirp! Chirp!"

Finally, right after the giant eagle started to kill all of the other Red-eyed White Birds, a very loud angry chirp was heard from the top of the cliff.

A white giant bird appeared; it was the Red-eyed White King Bird!

It flapped its wings and flew right up into the sky to fight against the giant eagle. The giant bird gained the upper hand very quickly.

"Keke!"

The giant eagle fluttered its wings and dodged away from the Red-eyed White King Bird. It then used its sharp claws and broke through the defence of one of the Red-eyed White Bird by ripping the bird's body. The giant eagle showed defiance towards the Red-eyed White King Bird and flew out of the formation like an arrow. A few of its black feathers fell as it escaped.

"Chirp! Chirp!"

Dead spiritual birds were a rare sight even though Fang Yuan had come here many times to steal spiritual objects.

Looking at the damage caused, the Red-eyed White King Bird gave a long chirp and lead the formation of Red-eyed White Birds to chase after the giant eagle.

"Eh?"

Fang Yuan gave a cold look and realised something was different.

"The black giant eagle slowed down its speed on purpose. It wanted to give an illusion that the Red-eyed White Birds could catch up....What a cunning beast...."

Seeing the Red-eyed White King Bird leading the rest of the Red-eyed White Birds out of the nest, Fang Yuan's eyes suddenly glittered. "A chance for me!"

"Chirp! Chirp!"

The birds flew further and further away. Soon, they disappeared.

Fang Yuan followed the pathway and kept climbing up. "There should be something of great value in the Red-eyed White King Bird's nest! Even if there isn't, I shall let those Red-eyed White Birds have a taste of a big loss!"

He could only kill a few of them previously due to the presence of the Red-eyed White King Bird and a few of others. However, what about now?

"Chirp! Chirp!"

He appeared and the Red-eyed White Birds suddenly realised there was an intruder. The birds let out mournful chirps.

"Get out!"

The Red-eyed White Birds that were guarding the nest were weaker. Fang Yuan executed his Eagle Claw Iron Skin Technique and almost got every bird killed. Even though his shirt had been ripped quite badly, the Red-eyed White Birds were incurring much more damage.

"It is considered normal for eggs to be present in a normal bird's nest...."

At that moment, Fang Yuan was not attracted by the eggs and went straight up to the peak. He then leapt onto a plateau.

"Puff!"

Both of his feet landed firmly on the plateau with his right hand shielding his body. He then checked his surroundings for any potential threats or movement.

The plateau was connected to the cliff and there was a giant hole

inside. The hole was where the Red-eyed White Bird's nest lay.

Seeing that an intruder had reached their nest, the Red-eyed White Birds got even crazier and went to fight against the intruder with no regard for their lives.

"Get out of my way!"

Fang Yuan shouted angrily. He fought against the birds and retreated a few steps back, and then got in deeper into the hole.

"Chirp! Chirp!"

Suddenly, among all the Red-eyed White Birds, a small spiritual bird with glittering feathers charged past all the other birds and straight at Fang Yuan.

Fang Yuan couldn't dodge in time. Instead, he released more inner strength. His shoulders started to vibrate like there was a sudden surge of energy.

At that moment, blood splashed everywhere!

Even though he had used his inner strength to defend himself, his shoulder was injured with a deep cut by a claw.

"There is indeed a spiritual beast guarding this nest and it managed to injure me! Good! Very good!"

He squinted his eyes and at the next moment, he leapt forward like a leopard and went straight at that spiritual beast while ignoring the rest of the birds.

"You shall have a taste of my Black Sand Eagle Claw Palm!"

His palm became black in colour like ink. His fingers and nails gave a metallic colour and a strange odour.

With the help of the system's function and his own research, Fang Yuan managed to combine the Black Sand Palm and the Eagle Claw Technique to form a new technique called the Black Sand Eagle Claw Palm.

Now, Fang Yuan could finally unleash the true power of the [Black Sand Palm (Grade 5)] by accumulating poison on the Eagle Claw, turning them into a truly lethal form!

"Chirp!"

This mutated Red-eyed White Spiritual Bird had a very fast speed. Once Fang Yuan missed his shot, it would escape to a far place.

If the spiritual bird was slower by a bit and its wings were scratched by Fang Yuan's Eagle Claw, its feathers would drop.

"Hehe!"

After one move, Fang Yuan stopped chasing and started laughing.

"Chirp! Chirp!"

That spiritual bird did not fly far and suddenly, it gave a mournful chirp. It then fell from mid-air and was dead. A breeze blew its feathers up.

That was the effect of the mutated Pearl Tail Snake's Poison. Its effect was so strong that an expert in inner force who had been poisoned by this poison would still be in trouble.

"Chirp! Chirp!"

Seeing that the spiritual bird was dead, the rest of the Red-eyed White Birds retreated and didn't dare to go forward. The birds had no choice but to let Fang Yuan enter the nest.

"Oh!"

The hole was not too deep and there was light shining through a gap in between the rocks. Fang Yuan walked a few steps and became alert. He then started smelling and said, "This is strange!"

By right, there should be a fishy smell in the spiritual beast's nest.

However, he could only smell fresh air and even the air smelled clean. The spiritual energy here was surprisingly copious.

At the end of the hole, there was a giant green rock and it had slight depressions in the middle. There were a few tree branches and feathers, which formed the shape of the giant bird nest.

"So this is where the Red-eyed White King Bird's nest lies?"

Fang Yuan moved a few steps forward and was disappointed that there were no spiritual beast's eggs.

Ever since he had adopted the Flower Fox Ferret as a pet, he became interested in adopting other spiritual beasts. It was very rare to find a spiritual beast like the Flower Fox Ferret who was willing to communicate with humans.

Fang Yuan was hoping that he could adopt one of the Red-eyed White Bird as the birds were considered spiritual beasts and could fly.

"Birds would become close to the first thing it sees as it emerges from its egg. If I managed to get the spiritual beast's egg and take care of it from young, the young spiritual beast can be tamed....."

Fang Yuan was filled with regrets as this Red-eyed White King Bird had not laid any eggs.

He went forward a few steps and looked carefully at the bird's nest. He eyes were attracted by something green in colour.

Beside the nest, there was spring water gurgling and flowing down, which formed a small lake.

Near the edge of the lake, there were a few strange bamboos being grown.

The bamboos were jade-green and as though the bamboos were carved with top quality crystal jade. The bamboos gave out spiritual energy and the polluted air was absorbed.

"Looks like these bamboos cause the air in this cave to be so

fresh....."

Fang Yuan went forward to check out the spiritual bamboo.

"Eh?"

This time, he saw something different. He found some bamboo flower buds that were about to bloom.

"This bamboo is flowering?"

Fang Yuan then recalled an old record which stated: 'It is the circle of life. The bamboo sprouts a shoot once every 60 years. The shoot will then flower, and the flower will bear fruit and wilt. The fruit will sprout again, completing the circle.'

"The blooming flower of the Jade Bamboo is bound to produce bamboo rice which is also called the bamboo fruit."

"The legends of old spoke that a Phoenix would refuse to perch on anything other than a phoenix tree, to eat anything other than Lian Shi and to drink anything other than the best spring water. This Lian Shi they spoke of referred to the bamboo fruit!"

"Previously, the spiritual land had very few spiritual objects. I was guessing someone must have taken the rest of the spiritual objects and looks like I was correct. This Red-eyed White King Bird took everything!"

The hole was filled with spiritual light, which clearly showed that there were many spiritual objects present here.

However, there were some spiritual objects which could not be moved easily as they would be destroyed if they were rashly relocated. Hence, Fang Yuan did not dare to collect any of the spiritual objects since he did not make any proper preparations.

The spiritual bamboos, on the other hand, were grown singly and grew very quickly. Hence, the spiritual bamboos did not have this problem and could be moved easily.

Fang Yuan came to the spiritual bamboo and started digging

using his Eagle Claw Technique. He was digging faster as compared to using a shovel. Not long after, he managed to dig the whole spiritual bamboo out along with its roots. The rhizome of the bamboo was in a good condition.

"With this spiritual bamboo, my trip is made worthwhile!"

Fang Yuan carried the spiritual bamboo happily and went to look for other spiritual objects.

"Keke!"

Suddenly, the Flower Fox Ferret, which was keeping a lookout, ran in anxiously.

"Is that....the black giant eagle?"

Fang Yuan came to the entrance of the hole and saw the black giant eagle. Previously, it was circling around the other Red-eyed White Birds, but now, it was charging towards him.

"It drew the Red-eyed White King Bird out of its nest to distract the bird so that it could come back to the bird's nest?"

He looked happy and said, "Looks like you were also coming for the treasures in the Red-eyed White King Bird's nest but unfortunately for you, I was here earlier to get them....."

At that moment, there were many white birds chasing after the giant eagle. The Red-eyed White King Bird was leading the other birds but it was still slower than the giant eagle and both of them became more distant.

Fang Yuan understood what was going on. The giant eagle was making a distraction for the Red-eyed White King Bird by picking up a fight with it and it used its faster speed as an advantage to draw them further away from the nest. Finally, the giant eagle then flew back to its target which were the treasures Fang Yuan looted from the nest.

However, this giant eagle was working alone and therefore

incurred a big loss as Fang Yuan managed to reach the nest first.

"My apologies....All these stuff are mine now and I cannot give it to you!"

With the giant eagle charging right at him, Fang Yuan laughed out loud and his right hand was shaped like a black claw. He then grabbed fiercely and shouted, "Eagle Claw Technique!"

"Bang!"

The giant eagle flew right out.

The Red-eyed White King Bird was not too far away and when it saw what was happening, it was enraged and gave a long and piercing scream. The tip of its feathers was tinged with blood. The beast then flew over and accelerated at an alarming speed.

"Enraged? Then I ain't interested in playing with you guys no more!"

Fang Yuan laughed. He carried the spiritual bamboo and escaped quickly from the peak.

Back at the entrance of the hole, the giant eagle was surrounded by the angry Red-eyed White King Bird and it gave a mournful scream.....

Chapter 49: Spiritual Bamboo

"Chirp"

In the spiritual lands of the Green Peak.

Fang Yuan held a bamboo stalk that was jade-green and ran like the wind. Behind him was an army of spiritual birds and the Red-eyed White King Bird.

The Red-eyed White King Bird, King of Birds, directed most of its hatred towards the Iron-tailed Black Eagle, but Fang Yuan, the 'thief', did not escape its wrath either. White birds screamed in the air and prepared to attack.

"Damn it, my clothes..."

In order to protect the spiritual plants, Fang Yuan had to channel the power of the Iron Skin Technique, which protected him from the aggressive clawing and pecking of the birds. His clothes were torn such that he was almost naked.

Of course, his clothes were not his main concern, for the Iron Skin Technique was not able to keep the birds from tearing gashes into his skin every time they lunged.

"Are you not going to act now, Flower Fox Ferret?"

As he charged down from the Peak, Fang Yuan manoeuvred his body and ran towards the fog.

"Keke!"

A bright light flashed.

A white figure flew past at the speed of lightning and had one of the spiritual birds by the neck. Following a loud snap, the bird's head tilted at an awkward angle. It was dead.

"Haha...well done!"

Grabbing this chance, Fang Yuan sped into the mist and sighed in

relief.

"Keke...keke..."

The Flower Fox Ferret dropped the spiritual bird and frolicked beside the spiritual bamboo. It wagged its tail at Fang Yuan like a pug, as if it wanted his approval.

"Hehe...seems like you know the value of the spiritual bamboo too. In order to protect it, I have suffered many wounds...ouch..."

Fang Yuan inhaled a breath of cold air and used remnants of his clothing to bandage his wounds.

"It's fortunate that Master left me some anti-scarring ointment. Or else I'd be disfigured..."

He gritted his teeth as he tended to his injuries, all the while glaring at the carcass of the spiritual bird.

"Great...we'll have this bird for dinner..."

As Fang Yuan concealed himself in the thick fog and heard the shrieks of the giant birds from a distance, he counted his blessings.

"To think that the King of Red-eyed White Birds could be this ferocious. If the Black Eagle hadn't challenged it first, I probably wouldn't have escaped..."

"Black Eagle, rest in peace! I'll be leaving now!"

Grabbing the spiritual bamboo and the carcass of the spiritual bird, Fang Yuan disappeared quickly into the fog together with the Flower Fox Ferret.

.....

The secluded valley.

Ever since Fang Yuan had demonstrated his power, no one had dared to trespass the mountains. Zhou Wenwu was also helping to keep an eye on the land. Everything was peaceful.

Fang Yuan entered the valley and ran straight to the gardens. He

checked that the defence mechanisms and traps were in place before setting his heart at ease.

Although the gardens were located in a more secluded part of the valley, the variety of plants to be found there, including the spiritual rice and tea, were very valuable. Fang Yuan did not want to take any chances.

"In the future, when I move all these plants to the Green Peak, the valley will become just a living space. That would be the best arrangement. For now, I just have to be more careful, set traps and tell the Flower Fox Ferret to be on guard..."

Fang Yuan then left for the tea garden and patrolled the vicinity. He was reassured when he saw that the Questioning Heart tea tree was untouched, and he began to think.

He used to lead a simple life. Now that he had revealed his background, it would definitely attract unwanted attention and consequently trouble. Nevertheless, he had made significant gains in martial arts and had a formidable amount of inner energy. It would be enough for him to defend himself.

As long as the miraculous properties of the Questioning Heart Tea remained unknown, there would be no problems.

"But if these problems can be avoided, they should be avoided..."

Fang Yuan had a solemn look on his face and his thoughts moved quickly. "The best form of defence is still the Flower Fox Ferret. Or perhaps a few fatal traps in the vicinity of the gardens will do the trick, with poison in the mix, a poison as potent as the Pearl Tail Snake's...of course, in the legends, the spiritual knights could set up powerful formations and borrow the strengths of heaven and earth. I don't think it's possible for me to do all that...let's leave it for now..."

Fang Yuan had to make some decisions in preparation for his relocation to the Green Peak. Defence mechanisms were necessary.

"The best formations are still the ones described in the legends. Most of the conditions aren't fulfilled though. I'll have to look at the next best alternatives..."

With the Questioning Heart tea leaves, complemented by the Meditative Tea Ceremony, Fang Yuan's magical energy had increased by leaps and bounds. He had met the requirements of becoming a spiritual knight, an alchemy master and the like.

Too bad these beings were mythological. Even if Fang Yuan had wanted to join their ranks, he could not.

"Eh?"

Fang Yuan was pleasantly surprised when he arrived at the Vermillion Jade Rice field.

In the field, shoots that bore a resemblance to red jade were growing strong with alarming momentum.

At the side, a row of emerald shoots had also emerged and were thriving.

"Emerald Grass! It really doesn't take a lot for this plant to prosper."

Fang Yuan squatted down and peered at the leaves of the Emerald Grass.

"Flower Fox Ferret, will you eat this?"

"Keke?!"

The Flower Fox Ferret looked conflicted and grabbed the spiritual bamboo at the side tightly with its claws.

It seemed like the Flower Fox Ferret preferred the bamboo to grass.

"Haha...you little clever thing!"

Fang Yuan gave a little smile.

"When the spiritual bamboos are grown, you'll have your share."

The bamboo was different from the other plants, for its growth was characterised by the branching out of its roots. If well taken care of, the bamboo plant would develop into a forest in a few years. It was one of the most valuable of the spiritual plants.

Otherwise, Fang Yuan would not be this excited to see the bamboo. He picked it without hesitation over the other treasures of the King of Red-eyed White Birds.

"Mm, here!"

Fang Yuan went around the garden and found a spot next to a hill of bluestone. He planted the spiritual bamboo there and then, and created a small irrigation ditch.

"Shhshhh"

The leaves of the spiritual bamboo were toyed with by the wind. Little white flowers on its stem were on the verge of blooming.

"Seems like the bamboo is likely to survive..."

Fang Yuan washed his hands, satisfied. He also looked towards his stats window.

"[Botany (Level 3)] - You are an expert among botanists and possess unimaginable powers. The plants that you grow have a small chance of evolving special traits!"

Fang Yuan had already seen this small chance for himself.

In the past, in all the gardens, only one tea tree had gone through a mutation. It was pathetic.

But it was that one tea tree that produced the Questioning Heart Tea, and together with the Meditative Tea Ceremony, produced an incredible effect on one's magical energy. To Fang Yuan, it seemed like everything in life was predestined.

Now, Fang Yuan had other plans.

This spiritual bamboo, spiritual rice and spiritual grace, could all be grown in bulk. Cultivated in large amounts, Fang Yuan could

trigger more mutating yields as long as his luck was not too bad.

Mutations on the spiritual plants, what would the yields be like?

Fang Yuan looked forward to seeing the results.

"It's just that...levelling up my skills are way harder than levelling up my techniques! My Black Sand Palm and Eagle Claw techniques can improve so much with only a day's worth of practice. I always hit a bottleneck when it comes to my skills. It seems like I have to fulfil a specific condition before I can move on to the next level..."

Fang Yuan looked at his [Botany] and [Medicine] stats with some regret.

These two skills currently had 99.9% worth of proficiency points. All that was left to level up was that tiny bit, and it was taking a long time.

This situation reminded Fang Yuan of the previous bottleneck.

Without the help of spiritual plants, his [Botany] would not have reached level 3.

"Unless...if I want to level up in [Medicine], I have to keep on healing patients, or devise cures to difficult diseases. And [Botany], does it require the cultivation of a higher grade spiritual plant?"

These skills did not immediately translate into fighting power, but it would provide invaluable assistance in many other areas. Fang Yuan thought very highly of them.

"Alright, tea time!"

After Fang Yuan was done, he clapped his hands and brought the Flower Fox Ferret to his abode.

One cup of Meditative tea, to cleanse the soul. To forget material possessions and the self.

Fang Yuan felt a clear aura diffuse into his body. His magical energy had begun to increase slowly, and he entered a state of

semi-consciousness.

.....

"Keke!"

After he had settled into reality again, Fang Yuan got to his feet, rejuvenated. He suddenly realised that the Flower Fox Ferret had ran to him anxiously.

"Hmm, something is wrong..."

From what Fang Yuan knew of the Flower Fox Ferret, it always stayed inebriated longer than Fang Yuan after a tea session. This was the first time it had gotten up earlier.

"Keke!"

Seeing that Fang Yuan was not really paying attention, the ferret became even more agitated and tugged on his pants, motioning for him to tag along.

"This...have you discovered something?"

Sensing that something was amiss, Fang Yuan followed the ferret out of the valley.

Having crossed a few rolling hills, Fang Yuan suddenly gave an exclamation. He knew what the Flower Fox Ferret had found.

Within his sight, was shrubbery that had been squashed by a gigantic and magnificent looking Black Eagle. There were huge gashes on its wings. The eagle had an electrifying look in its eyes and gave a defiant scream when it noticed Fang Yuan.

"The Black Eagle actually escaped..."

Fang Yuan was amazed and stepped forward tentatively.

"Chhhchhh"

The Black Eagle spread its wings and flapped mightily, only managing to raise a huge gust of wind before falling to the ground.

"This...what should we do? Kill it? Or ignore it?"

Fang Yuan gazed at the Black Eagle hesitantly.

But the Flower Fox Ferret jumped out hurriedly and clawed at the air.

"You want me to save it?"

Fang Yuan was not averse to saving the eagle. After all, he had ruined the plans of the eagle and had even dealt it a head injury. It would be appropriate if he made it up to the eagle.

"I could save it, but look at the state it is in...how do I do it?"

Fang Yuan stepped forward some more, and the eagle responded aggressively.

"Keke!"

Flower Fox Ferret cocked its head and ran to the side of the Black Eagle. It then began to twitter patiently, as if it was doing some explaining to the Eagle.

Following the ferret's actions, the Black Eagle lowered its head. It was calming down.

Fang Yuan watched this happen with some amusement. He was impressed.

"Holy cr*p...you're a ferret. When did you learn to speak to birds?"

Chapter 50: Healing

"Hey... Black Eagle, you should know that I'm here to save you. Regardless of what happened previously, we're even here alright..."

Although he knew that the black eagle could not understand human language, Fang Yuan was still relieved knowing that the Flower Fox Ferret could translate for him.

After saying a few words to the black eagle, he turned around and returned to the secluded valley. He came out with many bottles of medicine.

"Chirp....."

Seeing Fang Yuan approach it, the black eagle became increasingly anxious but was comforted by the Flower Fox Ferret.

'The eagle and ferret have so much chemistry...'

Witnessing this scene, Fang Yuan took a few steps forward and began to examine its injury.

"Hiss..."

Fang Yuan was shocked. "No wonder it's a spiritual beast. It's able to undergo self-healing, and the wounds have already begun to heal itself..."

This was good news for Fang Yuan, as it meant that he did not have to use too much of this precious ointment.

"Phew!"

Fang Yuan took out bandages and medicine, tried to make himself look harmless and approached the black eagle. He was extremely focused and concentrated his inner force on his Iron Skin Technique to protect himself.

Even with the assurance of the Flower Fox Ferret, it was still hard to tame the black eagle. Wouldn't it be risky if it suddenly

took a bite at Fang Yuan while he was treating it?

"Chirp! Chirp!"

Although the black eagle looked anxious, it tried to restrain itself and did not move.

"This injury..."

Fang Yuan noticed that its wound had already stopped bleeding, but broken bones and feathers were visible. They were in a gruesome mess with broken twigs and other plant matter. This would greatly hinder its path to recovery and the eagle would no longer be able to fly.

"The most important is to clear the foreign objects from the wound and correct the bone. It's going to be extremely difficult for the eagle to do it on its own, but if I were to help it..."

Fang Yuan stroked the wings of the black eagle.

The black feathers felt metallic to the touch, and it was a weird feeling.

"I'm going to start now, try to tolerate the pain!"

Fang Yuan focused, grabbed a tree branch and plucked it.

"Whoosh!"

A bloody arrow flew towards Fang Yuan, and the black eagle uncontrollably attacked, as it prepared to peck at Fang Yuan.

"Keke!"

The Flower Fox Ferret continuously tried to calm it down, and it took a while before the black eagle began to regain its composure.

"It seems... It's unappreciative of my efforts!"

Fang Yuan let out a long breath and extended 2 fingers out. Using his Eagle Claw Technique, he channelled his energy to his fingers, momentarily turning them akin to metal pliers. Then, He removed a piece of shattered bone using his fingers and threw it aside.

He felt enlightened after studying the wound inflicted by the Red-eyed White Birds on this strong black eagle, and he felt as though he gained a deeper understanding of the strength of the Red-eyed White King Bird.

'It seems... To defeat the king bird is no easy feat.'

As he thought to himself, his hands were quick and in no time, he cleared the wound and applied medication to it.

"Up next is to straighten the bones..."

Fang Yuan shook his head. "Even though you are a mutated species and your rate of healing is incredibly fast, you still need to give your feathers time to regrow, and so you won't be able to fly for the time being..."

In fact, this was the greatest worry for the black eagle.

Even though it was a mutated spiritual bird, it still needed to eat to survive, and especially in large amounts to quicken the recovery process.

"Don't you worry, since I saved you now, I will take care of you all the way till you have recovered!"

Fang Yuan comforted the black eagle as his hands felt its bones. He mustered all his strength and corrected the position of the bones!

"Kacha!"

A distinct sound was heard.

The black eagle winced, flung the Flower Fox Ferret away and tried to peck Fang Yuan.

"I knew it!"

Fang Yuan laughed and was already prepared for the black eagle's reaction. He took a step back, and suddenly punched towards its head.

"Peng!"

He landed a heavy fist on the forehead of the black eagle. Its eyes rolled, and it fainted on the spot.

"That's right... Finally, you're behaving!"

Fang Yuan wiped his hands. "I should have made you faint from the beginning!"

"Keke..."

The Flower Fox Ferret was watching at the side, full of pity for the black eagle.

"It's done!"

After dealing with the black eagle, Fang Yuan told the Flower Fox Ferret, "Up next, we shall set up a campsite here, and deliver food here once in a few days, and there should be no problem..."

However, his expression suddenly changed.

He noticed that the 'Skill' portion of his stats window had changed.

The digit '2' behind [Medicine (Level 2)] became blurred, jumped and transformed to '3'!

'[Medicine (Level 3)]? I have finally broken through!'

Fang Yuan was pleasantly surprised. 'Healing this spiritual beast was a blessing in disguise...'

He looked at the description for [Medicine (Level 3)]:

"[Medicine (Level 3)] - You are a professional within experts, a doctor who can make miracles. Will have a multiplied effect when dealing with complicated medical conditions! (Effect does not only apply to humans)"

"Does not only apply to humans..."

Fang Yuan looked at the black eagle, confused. "Could it be that I mastered veterinary without a master?"

At this moment, there were more changes to his stats window:

"Name: Fang Yuan

Essence: 3.5

Spirit: 3.4

Magic: 2.3

Age: 18

Cultivation: [Martial Artist (6th Gate)]

Technique: [Black Sand Palm (Grade 5)], [Eagle Claw Iron Skin Technique (Grade 6)]

Skill: [Medicine (Level 3)], [Botany (Level 3)]"

"Very well, it seems that skills would be harder to improve as compared to techniques, as there would be a special condition to be met before attaining a new level..."

Fang Yuan stroked his chin, deep in his own thoughts.

"The greater my skills, the higher the multiplier effect in the system... It seems that my title as the doctor who can make miracles happen would spread far and wide?"

The proficiency points for [Medicine (Level 3)] became zero and naturally required numerous hands-on practice before being able to fill it up.

Furthermore, to break through the bottleneck, he might have to heal certain rare and complicated medical conditions. All these would require him to set up a medicinal hall and do charity work.

"The idea of running this seems probable..."

Fang Yuan looked in the direction of Qingye City and zoned out...

...

Time passed and many days flew by in a blink of an eye.

The chaos in the Guo Family begun to settle down.

However, there were still rumours of a doctor who could work miracles living in the secluded valley. He was known to have a weird temper and one should never offend him.

Those who were curious and wanted to see the secluded valley for themselves were stopped by the Zhou Family outside the valley, which made the secluded valley even more mysterious.

It was dawn.

Fang Yuan walked out of his pavilion, sowed seeds, plucked weeds, fertilized his plants... After a round of chores, he proceeded to carry on with his intense martial arts training.

"The Eagle Claw Iron Skin Technique proficiency points have reached a maximum, and it's time to break through!"

After a session of training, Fang Yuan closed his eyes, concentrated his inner force, and spit out a bright white essence, like a sharp arrow ready to penetrate anything in its way.

"Hu... Out of the three Gates, Pain, Shock and Death, I can feel the Shock Gate now. Indeed, it's a test of one's magic points..."

His improvement in [Medicine] aided his progress in martial arts.

Fang Yuan understood that based on his magic points, he could undoubtedly break through the 7th Gate.

As for other martial artists, if they made any mistake while breaking the Gate, they would end up crazy and there would hardly be a cure for them.

"Keke!"

A white flash flashed by as the Flower Fox Ferret appeared in front of Fang Yuan, trying to explain something.

"Something has happened to the black eagle?"

Fang Yuan thought to himself. "By now, it should have recovered and be able to fly, right?"

The Flower Fox Ferret appeared surprised as though Fang Yuan guessed correctly.

It was reasonable for the Flower Fox Ferret to feel unjust. After all, all the food that was provided to the black eagle while it was recuperating was caught and delivered personally by the Flower Fox Ferret.

Now that it had recovered, it was sad to see it go without saying goodbye.

"Being a proud animal, since it allowed us to help it while it was injured, it would definitely remember our help and will reciprocate in the future..."

Fang Yuan stroked the Flower Fox Ferret. "You've come at the right time, let's drink tea!"

"Keke!"

The Flower Fox Ferret became excited after hearing about the Questioning Heart Tea.

By living in the deep mountains and leading a carefree life, as well as understanding the different spiritual plants and spiritual objects, Fang Yuan felt at peace as his thoughts and his martial arts began to settle down.

In technical terms, it meant that his foundation was solid, and the previous rushed efforts did not leave any hidden dangers behind.

With this benefit, it would still be worth it even if his progress bar did not fill up.

After drinking tea, Fang Yuan left the flower Fox Ferret to look after the valley, while he carried a small medical box and walked out of the secluded valley.

In front of the valley, there was a flat land, and on the flat land were three straw pavilions. Next to the huts was a small pavilion.

Many people walked past but no one dared to take a break here.

In front, a plump minister was anxious. Even though the weather was rather cooling, he was sweating profusely like ants on a hot wok.

"Keke... Old Lin is an acquaintance of the doctor who lives in the secluded valley. Why not just enter the valley, I'm sure the doctor would not scold you..."

A few people were resting in the pavilion. The first was Zhou Wenwu. He had good relations with the Lin Family at first, but after the Song Zhong incident, the two families drifted apart, and now their conversation became sarcastic.

"Haha... How would I dare?"

Minister Lin laughed but was troubled. 'Young Master Fang improved tremendously, and there were rumours that not only his [Medicine] was good, his martial arts was even better. Even Song Zhong was no match for him, so why would he give me any face? Those who offend him would be in deep trouble, and if he refused to heal the person, I might even lose my life too, so this cannot be taken lightly!'

"Doctor Fang is here?"

Fang Yuan's silhouette began to appear, and this shocked everyone.

"Mmm, everyone, listen up. Is everyone clear on the rules? Three patients a day, and all will have to come up with payment to satisfy Doctor Fang first... If this cannot be done, please take your leave..."

After his speech, he did not care less about others and entered the hut.

Regardless how influential or powerful these masters or martial artists were, all of them appeared humble before the doctor who would save their lives, like obedient rabbits in a queue, and this included Minister Lin.

Chapter 51: Saving Lives

Since the advancement of [Medicine], Fang Yuan, wanting to further push the boundaries, ordered the Zhou Family to release some news and rules on his behalf.

He built a straw pavilion before the secluded valley, seeing only three patients a day. Patients wanting to seek treatment had to personally head down to the pavilion.

In addition, the consultation fees had to be paid first. Trespassing on the back of the secluded valley was also prohibited. Any trespassers would be instantly kicked out, never being allowed back for treatment!

Indeed, such rules were naturally infuriating.

But in their world, only the strongest had the say and there were many people more eccentric than Fang Yuan. The people of Qingye City had grown to accept such rules as quirks of the divine healer, choosing to place their faith in him.

What were these mere rules compared to one's life?

Over time, the rules set by Fang Yuan became commandments that were strictly adhered to.

"Today, it's a little odd!"

Fang Yuan sat resolutely, his face showing signs of suspicion, "Usually it's rare to even see a person in a day. This time I'm actually met with both Zhou Wenwu and Lin Benchu ..."

Thinking back to the most recent patients that he treated, most of them suffered exterior wounds caused by the blade or close combat. Suddenly, Fang Yuan had a conjecture.

"Come in!"

"My respects Master Fang!"

Lin Benchu ordered his men to stretch in a martial artist whose

face was pale but lacked any presence of blood, looking just like a zombie.

Upon seeing Fang Yuan, Lin Benchu dared not overstep his position, completely adhering to the etiquette that he showed to Master Wenxin when they had first met.

He bowed, displaying utmost sincerity, "Please save him, Master Fang!"

"Medicine can't revive the dead. I need you, Minister Lin, to understand this point!"

Overhearing the correspondence between Fang Yuan and Minister Lin, Lin Benchu knew that the favours that he accumulated in the past were of no use. He let out a bitter laugh, his heart experiencing an ineffable sense of regret.

Fang Yuan ignored him and walked forward to lift the white cloth so as to examine the injury.

"Eh?"

He instantly noticed something different from that one glance.

"How is it, Master Fang?"

Minister Lin asked uneasily as if he was afraid that Fang Yuan would reply with a 'No'.

"This person ... is probably someone whose skill was beyond the View Gate. He was only one step away from crossing the Pain Gate by condensing his inner force."

Fang Yuan glanced over at the slightly depressed chest of the body. He shook his head, "Moreover, the martial art he practiced was an extremely Yin fist technique. Overestimating his own abilities, he challenged an in-house expert. He crippled his own Yin technique and suffered injuries caused by inner force."

"Tsk..."

Upon hearing that, Minister Lin took a deep breath of cold air as

his voice quivered, "Divine healer ... You are saying that he was injured by an inner force expert?!"

"What benefit do I get from lying to you?"

Fang Yuan looked at Minister Lin and rolled his eyes, "Who's the person that injured him? Where is he now?"

"Well, I am not sure either ... Regardless, this guy is a disciple of Spirit Returning Sect, Zombie Fist Feng Han. I plead you to quickly treat him ..."

Minister Lin's face revealed a shred of awkwardness, but he still sincerely knelt down to plead.

"This injury... Way too difficult!"

Standing up, Fang Yuan paced around for a few steps, before shaking his head again, "You must know that external injuries are easy to treat, but internal injuries are very challenging. I can't guarantee that I can heal this guy..."

With a sigh, Minister Lin's heart sank.

"However, saving his life and even allowing him to regain consciousness shouldn't be a problem..."

Fang Yuan's subsequent sentence caused Minister Lin to regain his vigor, his heart aching to shout words of abuse.

Fortunately, he himself knew that these were definitely not people he would want to offend. Thus, he promptly whipped out a box, "I heard that the divine healer has interest in various spiritual items. Pardon the old man's inability, but I specifically found a Vermillion Fruit"

"What? A Vermillion Fruit"

Fang Yuan laughed out, "Is it the legendary fruit that can immensely improve one's inner force, a mystical fruit that bestows power equal to ten years of hard work?"

"Yes..."

Minister Lin's face exuded a hint of awkwardness, "The Vermillion Fruit is an object of legend, so how could an old man like me obtain such a rarity? Well, I exhausted all my efforts to find this one fruit, I seek that the divine healer does not laugh at my incompetence!"

Fang Yuan rolled his eyes once more, almost believing that Minister Lin was playing tricks with him.

However, he still took the box. Upon opening the box, a dark red fruit was in sight.

This fruit was the size of a baby's fist and had the texture of a peach. While appearing ordinary, after meticulously feeling the fruit, Fang Yuan could sense a hint of spirituality.

"Eh... This is definitely a Vermillion Fruit..."

After confirming that the fruit was indeed a spiritual object, Fang Yuan felt an even stronger headache.

The Vermillion Fruit had a legendary reputation even amongst the ranks of other spiritual plants such as the Vermillion Jade Rice and the Emerald Jade Grass. It came as no surprise that the Vermillion Fruit had such stringent requirements for the environment it grew in.

Naturally, it would not sprout even after 8 or 10 years if it was casually planted in a random plot of land.

To make matters worse, this fruit had an extremely long period of maturity. 100 years could be considered as a single unit of time when describing the length of time required. Hence, one would only be expected to obtain this fruit through a chance encounter. Otherwise, only sects with a long history would dedicate the time to grow this fruit.

"If this fruit can sprout, my [Botany] skill will definitely see a breakthrough, but..."

Fang Yuan shook his head, "Unless... it's within the Green Peak Spiritual Grounds, along with my unique skills, there can be still

some hope!"

"Divine healer... So what do you make of this situation?"

Seeing the uncertainty in Fang Yuan's face, Minister Lin asked anxiously.

There was definitely a case to be made with the presence of this spiritual object. Regardless of how preposterous the request was, he gathered his focus on this sole hope.

"Hmm... I will help on the account that you and my master knew each other!"

Fang Yuan carefully kept the box and took out a cloth pouch containing rows of thin golden needles.

With a needle in hand, his face turned serious and the aura surrounding him instantly changed.

"Whoosh!"

Minister Lin looked at this scene and was thrown into a trance. It was as though he was watching the reincarnation of Master Wenxin.

"Chi.. Chi!"

Fang Yuan's needles were seemingly flying, in a blink of an eye, he pierced over ten of Feng Han's acupoints.

Feng Han's face distorted, abruptly opening his mouth to spit out a mouthful of black blood.

"Hoo...."

Although he was only awake for a short instance, falling back into unconsciousness shortly, his breathing stabilised and his face had a pinker hue. One could clearly see that he managed to cling to what was left of his life.

"Thank you, divine healer! Thank you!"

Minister Lin was overjoyed and said emotionally, "Witnessing

the divine healer's needles is like watching your master... I can't believe that despite the divine healer's young age, you managed to obtain the true skills of your master and even surpass his abilities!"

Bootlicking was free and hence he naturally continued to bootlick.

"Although I already knew this Golden Needle Acupoint Piercing technique beforehand, I still can't be compared to my master. With Level 3 Medicine, the effects are still magical!"

Fang Yuan felt ashamed but his act of brilliance managed to gain the respect of Minister Lin.

"The patient has been treated, Minister please return home. Forgive me for not sending you out!"

Seeing that Lin Benchu still had words to say, Fang Yuan decisively rolled up his sleeves and lifted his hand to gesture them out.

"Sigh..."

Lin Benchu joined his hands to bid farewell and along with his servants took their leave.

Fang Yuan glanced over at his back view and murmured, "Old sly fox."

If he were to really keep them around, it was not as if they would be honest and tell him the truth.

Rather than trying his luck getting answers out of them, he would rather look for someone else.

"Divine Healer Fang!"

An instant later, Zhou Wenwu entered and bowed. He spoke with a tone of utmost respect.

"Eh? Are you hurt?"

Fang Yuan shook his head and poked Zhou Wenwu with the

golden needle.

"Thank you, divine healer!"

Zhou Wenwu suffered a minor internal injury and felt that his inner power flow was not smooth. Upon the jabs of needles, he instantly felt comfortable and displayed his gratitude.

"Don't mention the titter tatter, what's actually happening outside? The injured that the three big families are sending here is abnormally many..."

Fang Yuan frowned, "Also, these are wounds from fights. To think that these injuries come from dealing with merely Guo Family?"

"The divine healer knows it himself...."

Zhou Wenwu's face turned solemn, "The three big families reached an agreement to divide Qingye City. I was fully rested and obtained manpower to kill and establish dominance. The Guo Family was the best target! I discussed this plan with the divine healer before...."

"Indeed, but you met with trouble?"

Fang Yuan nodded his head.

In reality, he already knew from the get go that the Guo Family had issues but he deliberately kept it from this bunch of people, hoping that they could be the ones to draw out the problem.

"Previously, everything went smoothly. Although the Guo Family was brave, they were no match for the three families. Even some of their businesses were about to be lost...."

Zhou Wenwu started to have suspicions, "However, from three days ago, the Guo Family managed to get the help of a powerful ally, causing a great hit to us... There is another strange thing!"

"Oh? Quick, tell me!"

Fang Yuan waved his hand.

"The Spirit Returning Sect has somehow managed to catch hold of this and specially sent a group of people over. The first of which was Zombie Fist Feng Han, to think...."

Zhou Wenwu shook his head, clearly showing how surprised he was, "When all these news are reported to the sect, they will definitely send more people down. Maybe even an elder will personally lead a team!"

While saying this, he was full of confidence. After all, from his perspective, there was nothing that the Spirit Returning Sect could not resolve within the Qinghe County.

But Fang Yuan was pretty clear that the mysterious party supporting the Guo Family was someone with an unpredictable strength that could definitely match the power of Spirit Returning Sect.

"The battle of the two titans is nearing...."

Although he did not know how Guo Family managed to get the help of such a power, Fang Yuan was no longer kept in the dark and could understand the current situation.

And perhaps even Lin Benchu that old fox knew less than he did.

"Zhou Wenwu!"

Contemplating to this point, Fang Yuan made a decision.

"Your humble servant is here!"

Facing Fang Yuan, Zhou Wenwu was obedient as ever, bowing instantly and listening intently.

"The Guo Family incident has a complicated background...."

Continuing to contemplate, Fang Yuan did not want the periphery that he built up to suffer heavy casualties, "If the sect has any requests, you should do your best to fulfill them. But remember never to personally put yourself at the frontline. I wish you all the best!"

"Could it be that the divine healer feels that Spirit Returning Sect is at a disadvantage?"

Zhou Wenwu heart felt a perturbing chill, suddenly feeling a great sense of inscrutability.

Chapter 52: Winning Over

"Vermillion Fruit..."

After turning away someone who was seeking medical help, Fang Yuan glanced at the nearly filled proficiency progress bar while he tossed the box containing the Vermillion Fruit. He was satisfied.

This might give him the chance to upgrade his [Botany] to Level 4.

"It is impossible to grow Vermillion Fruits in the secluded valley, but it might be possible to grow it on the spiritual lands of Green Peak. Either way, it is always good to be prepared!"

As Fang Yuan entered the valley, the Flower Fox Ferret darted towards him and circled him continuously. It seemed to have sensed a gem on Fang Yuan.

"This seed is of paramount importance, I cannot allow you to eat it!"

Holding onto the box, Fang Yuan said, "Anyway the Vermillion Jade Rice is about to ripen soon, are you still worried there is not enough food for you it?"

"Keke!"

Upon hearing this, Flower Fox Ferret thought about it extensively before indignantly making a choice.

"That's right, good boy!"

Right after Fang Yuan's compliment, Flower Fox Ferret raised its paw and pointed towards the direction of the spiritual bamboo. Its intentions were crystal clear.

"What... you want the spiritual bamboo after they have borne fruit as compensation?"

Fang Yuan touched his forehead and said, "You are really insistent on not being short-changed...Eh? Wait!"

Fang Yuan smelled something fishy as he looked at the expression on Flower Fox Ferret's face. It looked as though he made a deal that was almost too good to be true. This aroused Fang Yuan's suspicion and he hurriedly walked towards the spiritual bamboo.

Before he even reached, he took in a deep breath and felt enveloped by a gush of current in the air.

"The purity of the air here is already almost on par with that of the spiritual land. What a pity it is still lacking in terms of spiritual energy..."

Shaking his head, Fang Yuan crossed the drain.

Next to a rock, a green bamboo looked as though it was brimming with life and energy.

"From what I saw earlier this morning, it looks extremely different...Is this because it has finally accepted this plot of land?"

Fang Yuan broke into a smile. This meant that the spiritual bamboo was completely alive. Furthermore, looking at the flower buds, it would only take a few days for it to blossom.

Fang Yuan finally understood why Flower Fox Ferret was willing to compromise on the Vermillion Fruit. It had set its sights on the spiritual bamboo!

Of course, if the Vermillion Fruit was perfectly undamaged, with its flesh intact, it would be a completely different situation altogether.

...

One night passed.

On the next day, Fang Yuan woke up early in the morning. He immediately felt there was something different about his surroundings.

"Could this be.....the spiritual energy produced by the spiritual

bamboo? It could even travel till here?"

Appearing to be solemn, Fang Yuan was actually filled with astonishment at this discovery.

"Keke!"

Flower Fox Ferret sprinted towards Fang Yuan. It was obvious that there was important news from the garden.

Fang Yuan rushed over to where the spiritual bamboo was. The flower bud he saw the day before was in full bloom. Its pure white petals danced in the wind, releasing its spiritual energy. It also seemed to be causing a subtle resonance in the area next to it.

"Is that...the field of Vermillion Jade Rice?"

Fang Yuan tensed up and walked hurriedly to the side of the field. He was shocked at what he saw.

In front of him were several red stalks of rice. They were half the height of a grown man and bore enormous grains that bent the thick stalks of the plant.

"It ripened surprisingly fast! This is even faster than the previous harvest!"

Fang Yuan stepped forward and stroke the grains and said, "Furthermore, the quality appears to be more superior than the previous harvest. Even though there were no major and sudden changes, could it still have been gradually accumulated?"

Looking at this, Fang Yuan was filled with aplomb.

As long as he selected the best harvest and continued to grow them over the next few seasons, he would definitely be able to bring about a transformation in the spiritual plants.

Looking at the numerous fields nearby, Fang Yuan was suddenly touched and thought to himself, "Great! There is sufficient spiritual rice from the harvest this time for Flower Fox Ferret and me to consume over the year...There will even be leftovers after

we leave behind those for planting and cultivation...If we can sell the rest, it would definitely bring in immense riches!"

The Vermillion Jade Rice was only the lowest grade of spiritual plants. There was even a department within the Spirit Returning Sect that sells it as a source of revenue.

Previously Fang Yuan was thoroughly shocked by the price of this sort of spiritual plants. Based on the quality of his recent harvest, he was sure that it would be in great demand on the market.

Of course, there would be people who did not deserve it but yet desired to obtain it.

"If it is just the Vermillion Jade Rice, it isn't such a big deal... furthermore...why would I even need money?"

Upon packing the last sack of Vermillion Jade Rice into the storage room, Fang Yuan broke into a wide smile of satisfaction. He thought, "Great, we shall eat Vermillion Jade Rice every day starting from today until we get sick of it!"

"Keke!"

Flower Fox Ferret which was next to him jumped about excitedly. It looked like it could hardly control its excitement.

With the spiritual rice, what else was there for Fang Yuan to fret about? He cooked a big pot of fragrant Vermillion Jade Rice right away.

The uniqueness of the flavour of the Vermillion Jade Rice this time was many times more intense than the flavour previously. The immense pleasure from eating the Vermillion Jade Rice was also intensified.

After a long time, Fang Yuan finally woke up from his deep sleep. He opened his mouth and released a breath of white gas.

He looked down and saw that he had already finished the entire

pot of spiritual rice. Down to the very last cell in his body, he felt as though as he was reborn

"The effects of the spiritual rice are even stronger this time..."

Fang Yuan was extremely pleased. As he looked in the direction of the spiritual bamboo, he was filled with doubts as he wondered, "If the blossoming of the flower of the spiritual bamboo could actually accelerate the time taken for the spiritual rice to ripen, what type of spiritual bamboo is this? What are the uses of its fruits?"

His doubts were answered soon enough.

After three days, most of the flowers from the bamboo withered. They were replaced by green fruits which hung on the branches, brimming with life. It was a sight Fang Yuan had never seen before.

"Bamboo fruits...in the legends, they were the staple foods of the phoenixes..."

Flower Fox Ferret was already waiting patiently at the side for some time. Fang Yuan glanced at it, plucked a fruit and tossed it in the air.

"Shoo!"

In a flash, Flower Fox Ferret appeared on the other side of the rock with fruit in its mouth. It then devoured the fruit voraciously.

"What is it like?"

As Fang Yuan watched Flower Fox Ferret intently as he waited for Flower Fox Ferret to finish its meal.

"Keke...Keke..."

Flower Fox Ferret pretended to not understand Fang Yuan and pointed at the spiritual bamboo again. It was hinting that it could not taste the full flavours of fruit completely by just trying one piece. It needed a few more in order to get a sense of it.

"What a greedy rascal!"

Fang Yuan jokingly reprimanded. At the same time, Fang Yuan had a sense of assurance as he thought, "There should not be a major problem with it..."

At the same time, Fang Yuan plucked a fruit and tossed into his own mouth.

Crunch!

It had the flavours of a green apple. It was sweet and palatable. At the same time, it sent a warm sensation flowing smoothly down his throat.

"Erm... this is..."

Fang Yuan's eyes widened as he felt his strength, inner force, Spirit, and Magic recharged to its maximum at that instant. He felt comfortable and extremely energetic at the same time.

"It does not increase stats, could it be that it promotes recovery?"

He thought again, "Could this allow one to recover Essence, Spirit, and Magic in such a short time?"

As his train of thoughts led to Red-eyed White Bird's outburst, Fang Yuan finally understood why the spiritual bird treated the bamboo fruit as though it's a piece of treasure.

After its outburst, it would definitely deplete a lot of its energy which would mean a long recovery time. However, with the fruit, this time would shorten.

"Even during a duel when both sides suffer serious injuries, this fruit could be consumed?"

Looking at the spiritual bamboo, Fang Yuan was gradually enlightened. He thought, "No wonder, this bamboo fruit could even snatch a person away from the hands of death, which explains its immense value..."

"Hold on!"

Slightly worried, Fang Yuan looked at Flower Fox Ferret and asked, "You did not seem to expend a lot of energy today and you even ate one fruit before this, why are you still asking for more?"

"Keke?"

Flower Fox Ferret thought for a moment and began gesturing. Fang Yuan then realised the bamboo fruits could only induce recovery in humans. However, when consumed by spiritual beasts, especially birds, it appeared to aid in their growth on top of its recovery effects. As a result, it was no surprise the Iron-tailed Black Eagle and the Red-eyed White King Bird treasured it so much.

Fang Yuan broke into a slight smile as the thought of the Iron-tailed Black Eagle surfaced in his mind.

Recently in the deep valley, Fang Yuan came across several dead beasts such as wild boars and tigers. Their wounds looked like they were inflicted by an animal with razor sharp claws. These must be the Iron-tailed Black Eagle's acts of gratitude.

At this instant, Fang Yuan thought of an even better idea.

"Flower Fox Ferret...take these bamboo fruits and tempt the Iron-tailed Black Eagle into becoming our companion...No, tell the Iron-tailed Black Eagle that we would give it bamboo fruits if it ensured the safety of this valley. How about that?"

The Iron-tailed Black Eagle had a formidable strength. Even though it was slightly inferior to the Red-eyed White Bird, it had an advantage over most others as it could fly.

Generally, once it took flight and circled around the valley, nobody could come within 3 miles of the valley, not even the most experienced foot soldiers.

Actually, Fang Yuan had already thought about making use of the Iron-tailed Black Eagle for quite some time.

After he finally understood the instructions, the Flower Fox

Ferret sped off into the vegetation with a few bamboo fruits.

...

"Caw Caw!"

In no time, along with an ear-piercing shriek, a deafening noise reverberated through the valley.

Fang Yuan hurried over and found a dead python that was as thick as a human's arm lying the ground. There were a few big holes on its body which fresh blood flowed out from.

"Eh? Golden Silk Python?"

Fang Yuan stepped forward to take a closer look. His face instantly lit up with joy as he thought, "Even though we do not have the snake gall, the skin and bones of a snake are also exceptional medicinal ingredients. Along with snake meat, we have sufficient food to last a few days..."

"Chirp! Chirp!"

Amidst the strong wind and loud noise, the Iron-tailed Black Eagle descended from the sky. From its back, a white little head emerged and hopped off gracefully and moved over next to Fang Yuan.

"Brother Eagle, have you considered my offer?"

Fang Yuan laughed and drew out a few bamboo fruits from his robes.

"Chirp! Chirp!"

Although the bamboo shoots did capture the Iron-tailed Black Eagle's attention, it tilted its head upwards, as though it was not easily swayed by Fang Yuan's gifts.

However, it was evident from the eyes of the spiritual beast that it was indeed tempted by Fang Yuan's offer.

"Keke Keke...Sssss..."

As Flower Fox Ferret gestured and explained, Fang Yuan quickly understood the situation. He remarked, "Oh, so Brother Eagle is unwilling to be the spiritual beast of humans? You misunderstood my intentions, I never thought of doing that. I only wanted to hire you that's all. You will help me to patrol and protect this area and I will give you the spiritual fruits as payment...if it is insufficient, there are spiritual tea and spiritual rice..."

Fang Yuan shook his head and ordered Flower Fox Ferret to translate it for the Iron-tailed Black Eagle.

"Chirp! Chirp!"

Flower Fox Ferret and Iron-tailed Black Eagle communicated through gestures and Iron-tailed Black Eagle eventually shook its head.

"What a difficult nut to crack!"

Fang Yuan wrecked his brain for a solution and told Flower Fox Ferret, "Flower Fox Ferret, let Iron-tailed Black Eagle know, we will not hire it. Instead, we are offering it...These spiritual fruits are the gifts we offer respectfully to it for its service in protecting the valley. How about this?"

Shaking his head, Fang Yuan sent the Flower Fox Ferret to translate his words.

"Chirp! Chirp"

As expected, the Iron-tailed Black Eagle nodded its proud head this time, intently eyeing the bamboo fruits in Fang Yuan's hand.

"Alright, there you go!"

Fang Yuan tossed the fruit into the air and watched the eager beast rushed to consume it. In his mind, Fang Yuan was speechless as he thought, "This beast is so ridiculously egoistic. This deal I made him was exactly what I proposed earlier. Fortunately, it met me, if not it would not be as profitable..."

Chapter 53: Urgent Matters

Autumn passed by slowly into the bitterly cold winter.

Snowflakes as large as goose feathers fell from the sky, blanketing the entire secluded valley in no time.

Fang Yuan opened the window and exhaled a mist of white air.

As he was an inner force expert, the temperature of the surroundings had little effect on his body. Even though he was wearing just a layer of thin clothing, he did not seem to feel cold at all.

"Chirp! Chirp!"

Iron-tailed Black Eagle called out in mid-air before landing steadily on the snow. It clutched a carcass of a young deer in its talons and looked at Fang Yuan intently.

Iron-tailed Black Eagle's was already extremely pampered by the offerings of spiritual items and other foodstuffs that Fang Yuan fed it daily. It seemed as if Fang Yuan were to chase it away, it would not be willing to return to its previous harsh lifestyle in the wilderness.

"Keke!"

Upon seeing good food, Flower Fox Ferret sped away, leaving shallow footprints in the snow that looked like plum flowers.

"Choo..."

Iron-tailed Black Eagle cried out when it saw Fang Yuan walking out. Its message was crystal clear.

"Oh? There's someone familiar approaching?"

Through some interaction recently, Fang Yuan managed to grasp some of the more basic terms of the language used by these spiritual beasts. However, he has yet to fully master them. Nonetheless, he was still definitely confident of the few terms he

used to communicate with the Iron-tailed Black Eagle.

"Keep out of sight in the meantime..."

As he tended to the small deer in preparation for his next meal, he spoke to Iron-tailed Black Eagle without turning his head, "Relax, there will be a portion of spiritual rice and barbequed meat for you today..."

"Chirp Chirp..."

With Fang Yuan's reassurance, Iron-tailed Black Eagle then flew away reluctantly, disappearing into a tiny black speck in the sky in no time.

This was Fang Yuan's secret weapon; he could not reveal it to anyone so easily.

As for the existence of Flower Fox Ferret, it was no longer a secret to those close to him. Instead, the knowledge of its existence seemed to intimidate them.

"Zhou Wenwu would like to meet you, sir!"

Before long, Fang Yuan strolled to the small hut along with the noise of the gong. Here, he saw Zhou Wenwu with a large and thick wolf skin cloak draped over him as he waited alone.

"My greetings!"

Seeing Fang Yuan appear, Zhou Wenwu's eyes lit up as he stepped forward and showed his respects.

"Erm...you're not a stranger, please follow me into the valley!"

This man's loyalty and integrity could be trusted to some extent. In fact, they were put the test before. They were also secretly manipulated by Fang Yuan and Fang Yuan treated him differently from others.

"Have you found out what's the mysterious force behind the Guo family?"

Fang Yuan flicked off the snowflakes that had fallen on his body and asked Zhou Wenwu casually.

Seeing that Fang Yuan was not affected by the cold at all, Zhou Wenwu was filled with admiration and envy for him. He replied, "I've found out already and I'm here to report my findings sir!"

"Very well, let's discuss it in the valley. What a great timing, the spiritual rice is also ready!"

Fang Yuan looked into Zhou Wenwu's eyes. Although Zhou Wenwu seemed pure and innocent, Fang Yuan had the feeling that Zhou Wenwu was intently sizing him up. Recognising this, he said, "Based on your martial prowess, you have already reached the 5th Gate. What you need to do now is to strengthen your foundations and break through the Pain Gate!"

"The more solid and firm your foundations are, the higher the chances of breaking through the 3 Perilous Gates. Even in the event you fail, the negative effects will not be as severe...Have you finished the Vermillion Jade Rice from the last time? Take along another batch with you this time then!"

"Thank you, sir!"

Zhou Wenwu was instantly delighted.

After all, to be able to consume spiritual rice daily to boost his martial prowess was a privilege not even the direct disciples of the Spirit Returning Sect could enjoy.

He would be stupid to betray Fang Yuan. Additionally, Fang Yuan had already emplaced traps on his body as preventive measures.

Even though he did not say it explicitly, Fang Yuan had an immense reputation for being a divine healer. Any doubts Zhou Wenwu had were erased instantly.

Even if Fang Yuan were to order him to fight against the Spirit Returning Sect, he would still do Fang Yuan's bidding no matter what.

Despite this, Fang Yuan still had some reservations about him.

At least he was still able to maintain his possession of the spiritual tea and Iron-tailed Black Eagle a secret.

"Greetings esteemed ferret!"

After stepping into the valley and seeing Flower Fox Ferret, he became extremely humbled.

At that point in time, he already knew that Flower Fox Ferret was the guardian spiritual beast of the valley and its specific role was to watch over the Vermillion Jade Rice.

It was this sort of valuable secret that was worthy of the guardianship of a spiritual beast.

Remembering when he first saw Flower Fox Ferret, it did not pay him any attention. It was hugging onto a large porcelain bowl and concentrated all its attention on voraciously consuming spiritual rice from it. This scene agitated Zhou Wenwu extremely.

It was too embarrassing and intolerable!

Not only was he unable to defeat Fang Yuan's pet spiritual animal, even what he was eating was inferior to the pet's. What sort of miserable and pathetic situation was he in?

'At least it isn't too bad... Fang Yuan still gave me some of the spiritual rice after all, even though it was not as much as the ferret's...'

At this point, Zhou Wenwu was minimally comforted that at least Fang Yuan treated him as well as his own pet. However, what Zhou Wenwu did not know was that Fang Yuan did not value the Vermillion Jade Rice as highly as he did.

"Have a seat!"

Entering the abode, Fang Yuan grabbed a cushion and poured a cup of clear tea. Even though it was just common tea, Zhou Wenwu felt as though he was pampered beyond measure by this mere

gesture and was struck beyond words.

"Have you found out the backers of the Guo family?"

Fang Yuan shook off the snowflakes on his body and sat down.

"Yes..."

As Zhou Wenwu mentioned this, he slapped himself on the face.

Even with Fang Yuan's prior cautioning and medical help to preserve his life, he still nearly lost his life to the Guo family.

"Ever since the failure last time, our sect repeatedly dispatched many groups of people led by elders to duel with the force behind the Guo family. After several intense duels, they finally found out that the force behind the Guo family was actually the Five Ghosts Sect!"

Zhou Wenwu said angrily.

"Five Ghosts Sect?!"

Fang Yuan frowned. It seemed that after all, he was not as familiar as the situation around him as he thought he was.

"This sect is extremely secretive and mysterious. They have always operated within Lieyang County. We also just found out that the ancestor of Guo family was actually a known disciple of the Five Ghost Sect...."

Zhou Wenwu sighed and continued saying, "The Five Ghost Sect is an extremely powerful sect in the Secluded Mountain Prefecture. It is almost as powerful as the Spirit Returning Sect. They are even more mysterious and brutal than the Spirit Returning Sect too. By activating their spies in the Guo family and even sending out experts this time, it seems like they are looking for something..."

"Oh? What are they looking for?"

Fang Yuan's heart skipped a beat and he enquired immediately.

"I am not too sure myself, but it definitely is a piece of treasure! It

was stolen and taken away by a traitor, but a lot of time has passed since then. I'm afraid it's already lost..."

Zhou Wenwu shook his head and carried on saying, "The Spirit Returning Sect also suffered big losses. I also just heard that in this period of time, the Guo family have also suffered great losses. It also appears that the experts from the Five Ghosts Sect have realised that they are not gaining much from this area and are starting to pull out..."

"Pull out..."

Fang Yuan nodded his head and asked, "Is it because of the Spirit Returning Sect?"

"Correct!"

Zhou Wenwu nodded his head and habitually replied in a slightly proud tone saying, "Their actions have already startled our leader. They are even preparing to send Elder Han down. No matter how proud and daring the Five Ghosts Sect are, Qingye City is after all the territory of our Spirit Returning Sect! Only that..."

Zhou Wenwu then began to hesitate and stuttered, "...the retreat of Five Ghosts Sect seems to be because they are consolidating their forces for some far more important reason back home...our sect leader has already ordered us to investigate and our confrontation with them might carry on!"

"So, it's like that..."

After hearing this, Fang Yuan remained silent for some time.

It was obvious that whatever the Spirit Returning Sect was doing at this point in time was to some extent also helping him to avert disaster.

Unless the Spirit Returning Sect drew away most of the attention of Five Ghosts Sect, the Five Ghosts Sect might even head straight to the valley.

Fang Yuan was however puzzled at their decision to withdraw their forces now.

Qingye City was the territory of the Spirit Returning Sect and furthermore, they had the support of the Wu Zong.

It seemed reasonable for them to withdraw the moment they captured the attention of Shi Yutong. However, from Zhou Wenwu's account, it appeared they had an ulterior motive.

"It seems like...I really have to leave this valley!"

Waving his hand, Fang Yuan gestured for Zhou Wenwu to leave him. After intense consideration, he finally made up his mind.

Fang Yuan began to ponder over this incomplete treasure map that had captured so much attention from the Five Ghosts Sect. There was probably a lot more to it.

...

Guo family.

Several horse carriages were already lined up neatly in formation ready to set off. Members of the Guo family were looking distraught and several women were sobbing. After all, they were leaving their home for good and they did not know when they would be returning.

"Hmph, all you know is how to cry! What a burdensome bunch!"

From the side, a few stern-looking riders atop massive horses clad in black shouted angrily, "Stop behaving this way and move faster!"

"Master, why do we have to save this household? After all, apart from the elders of the Guo family, what business do these commoners have with our sect?"

One of the disciples who had a skull embroidered on the front of his robes complained to an elder next to him.

"Idi*t!"

The elder flew into a rage unexpectedly and said, "The elders of the Guo family sacrificed their lives for our sect and now in this conflict we caused more of their family to lose their lives. If we just abandon them like this, our other disciples will lose hope and confidence in us. You have to understand that it is precisely these commoners that form the roots of our sect..."

"Hmph, Spirit Returning Sect..."

The young martial artist scoffed, "Isn't it unnecessary for someone who is around 7th or 8th Gate to come along on this operation?"

"Hehe, if it was just inner force experts who came it would be easy..."

The elder shook his head and said, "It's just that I heard news that Elder Han was coming along with the reinforcements from the Spirit Returning Sect. He mastered the Yin and Yang energies twenty years ago and is already a martial artist of the 4 Heavenly Gates...I am reluctant to do so but I have to admit he is more superior than me!"

"This journey to Qingye City is really unpleasant..."

As if he was hit by some bad news, the young martial artist now looked down in distraught and said, "We have suffered too many losses...As for the Spirit Returning Sect disciples, despite suffering serious injuries, they could recover their old strength so easily so quickly..."

"Yeah, I have heard that there's a divine healer in this area. Apparently, he could even bring someone dead back to life. Rumours described him to be so divine and godly that it seemed ridiculous. But from the looks of it, there seems to be some truth in the rumours. Should there be a chance in the future I would like to meet this person..."

The elder tugged on his horse reins and left without turning

back, saying, "For now, nothing is more important than our sect's issues. When you get out of Qinghe County, escort this group of people to Lieyang County with the rest of your seniors. I am making a move first!"

After completing his sentence, he set his horse into a full sprint and disappeared in no time without even turning back.

Chapter 54: Attack

"Chang chang!"

"Chang chang!"

The ear-splitting sounds of a gong pierced the silence of the secluded valley.

"Eh?"

Fang Yuan, who was in the midst of his training, frowned and looked towards what seemed to be a large crowd gathering outside the valley and remarked, "Why are there still such unruly people? They must be from the Spirit Returning Sect or the Five Ghosts Sect!"

It was evident that given his capabilities, there was no doubt that he was the leader of the Qingye City. Even in Qinghe County, many of the martial artists showed him a great deal of respect.

After all, in the world of martial arts, nobody could guarantee that they would not get ill or injured, and not require the services of the divine healer ever.

It was probably either of those two who dared to do something like this.

With this thought, Fang Yuan strolled out of the valley without delay.

...

"Elder Lu, you cannot barge into the valley!"

Zhou Wenwu stood his ground in front of the valley, speaking righteously, "These are the rules set by Divine Healer Fang. If you continue to blatantly disregard them and offend him, Elder Zhao's injuries might worsen..."

This group of people belonged to the Spirit Returning Sect. At the front of the group, two disciples were carrying a stretcher. An

elderly man whose breathing was extremely weak laid on it.

"Phew, phew..."

Elder Lu clenched his fist and his eyes were bloodshot with rage. He barked, "What do you know? If Elder Zhao loses his life, you will not be able to answer for it!"

These words increased the already high tension.

Looking at Elder Zhao on the stretcher, Zhou Wenwu was in a dilemma.

For any sect, martial artists beneath the 5th Gate were insignificant. Once a martial artist broke through the 6th Gate and developed inner force, the martial artist would be immediately bestowed an elder position. This was the true mark of an elite martial artist.

Elder Zhao was well known in Qinghe County for his Great Sun Technique and Cloud Stepping Technique. Unfortunately, while he was rushing to another person's rescue, he bumped into Gui Wusheng from the Five Ghosts Sect. Gui Wusheng was an infamous villain who was an 8th Gate expert who had broken through the Death Gate. It was rumoured that he already mastered the Yin energy and entered the realms of the 4 Heavenly Gates too!

A short battle later, Elder Zhao had been injured. Thankfully Elder Lu came just in time, and Gui Wusheng seemed to be in a rush, otherwise, he probably would have lost his life there and then

It was no wonder Elder Zhao was in such a depressing condition.

"Move aside!"

As he shouted, Lu Zhisen's temper rose rapidly as he glared menacingly at those who stood in his way.

"No way!"

Zhou Wenwu broke out in cold sweat but he refused to budge,

explaining, "Divine Healer Fang is an inner force expert that broke through the Pain Gate. Elder Lu, please show some respect!"

"Hmph, there are so many rumours going about to the point that it's hard to believe them anymore. Even if he is at the 6th Gate, what could someone that just broke through do against my iron pole?"

Lu Zhisen remarked arrogantly. He was also speaking his mind.

After all, fighting against a newly advanced [Martial Artist (6th Gate)] would definitely not be a problem for him, considering his vast amount of experience.

Standing away from Zhou Wenwu and Lu Zhisen, Lin Benchu and the head of the Zhang household watched nervously in silence with a group of disciples from the Spirit Returning Sect.

They were naturally inclined towards supporting Zhou Wenwu as Lu Zhisen was an elder infamous for his recklessness. However, they also did not dare to bear the brunt of Lu Zhisen's murderous rage, hence they looked to Zhou Wenwu with respect and awe.

"Saving this person's life is extremely important and urgent! Get out of my way!"

Having lost his patience, Lu Zhisen swung his hand at Zhou Wenwu.

"Bang!"

Zhou Wenwu was hit by an enormous force which he could not resist even with his inner power of the 5th Gate. As a result, he was sent flying through the air.

Inner power indeed lost out when pitted against inner force.

Furthermore, Lu Zhisen did not expand all his power. Should he have used his weapon, Zhou Wenwu's brains would have been splattered on the ground.

Even so, Zhou Wenwu was sent soaring high into the sky.

"Bang!"

After landing with a dull thud, he realised that he was not injured at all. He was forcefully grabbed up by the neck by Fang Yuan with only one hand.

"Erm? So you are the Divine Healer Fang Yuan?"

Looking at the youthful Fang Yuan emerge from the valley, Lu Zhisen felt an uneasiness in his heart.

Fang Yuan looked incredibly young. He looked like he was younger than 20 years of age. Yet when he responded earlier by nimbly catching Zhou Wenwu with ease, his skills seemed to suggest otherwise. This confused Lu Zhisen greatly.

"Yes I am..."

Fang Yuan released Zhou Wenwu and while looking at Lu Zhisen, shook his head and said, "You refused to abide by my rules and yet you still expect me to tend to your patient?"

"You..."

Lu Zhisen's face flushed red with anger. Swinging out his right hand, he instantly grabbed a metal pole as thick as a teacup and threatened Fang Yuan, "You dare to refuse to treat my patient? Be careful of my Coiling Dragon Iron Pole..."

"Fu Ha ha ha!"

Seeing this, Fang Yuan could not resist breaking into laughter.

It was an entertaining sight watching Lu Zhisen's reckless and temperamental behavior.

Using force to threaten a doctor to tend to a patient? What's the difference between that and forcing a fengshui master to select a spot to bury one's ancestors? If Lu Zhisen intended to end his family line, he could continue trying his luck.

"Argh...This is pissing me off!"

Lu Zhisen's face was blood red and the veins on his forehead swelled up and protruded out. He slammed the iron pole on the ground and caused a tremor around him. Raising his immensely huge arm, he charged towards Fang Yuan.

"Hmm...6th Gate inner force?"

Fang Yuan's eyes flashed and opened his palm, spreading his fingers like an eagle's claw, creating a swishing noise.

"Sssss pa!"

With a loud explosion in the air, Lu Zhisen staggered two steps backward. It was evident Fang Yuan inflicted some damage on him.

"Ah... Dragon Subduing Pole Technique!"

With his eyes reddening further and his body bursting with rage, Lu Zhisen was going to give everything he had. Swinging the iron pole in his hand, Lu Zhisen brought it down with immense force.

"Good move!"

Fang Yuan moved forward swiftly and twisted his Eagle Claw. When he reappeared, he broke through the shadows created by the movements of Lu Zhisen's pole technique, grabbed onto the pole and forced it downwards.

"Bang!"

With a reverberating explosion, the Coiling Dragon Iron Pole deeply penetrated the soil, sending large amounts of soil particles into the air.

Lu Zhisen's face was now swollen and red. His nostrils were almost going to start bleeding. He grabbed the pole with two hands and mustered all his strength as he tried to yank it out of the ground. However, the pole did not seem to budge. It seemed as though the hand on top of the pole was like the Five Finger Mountain that physically repressed the Monkey God.

After the short exchange of blows, Lu Zhisen broke out in profuse perspiration. The colour drained from his face as he tried to catch his breath.

"So? Do you concede defeat?"

Fang Yuan asked with a smile. He was delighted with his own improvement.

"You...already broke through the Shock Gate?"

Lu Zhisen stuttered, but there was a degree of certainty in his voice.

In the earlier bout, Fang Yuan completely dominated the fight and displayed an impeccable character. Every move he made completely wowed the spectators. It was as though they were watching a renowned martial artist in action.

The intense concentration Fang Yuan had seemed unrivaled.

Lu Zhisen might have been a brute, but he was not stupid. He quickly got to his feet and respectfully apologised, "Sorry for offending you, I hope you would forgive me. Should you seek to dish out punishment, please just punish me!"

As Lu Zhisen conceded defeat, he remembered the brilliant and talented individual the elder accepted as a student.

In the past, the student improved at an incredible rate. But in comparison with Fang Yuan, it no longer seemed as impressive anymore.

"Eh?"

"This..."

Lin Yuanwai and the family head of the Zhang Family widened their mouths in disbelief. It was almost as if they were in a dream.

In just one bout, the fiery Elder Lu infamous for his reckless violence was brought to his knees.

Furthermore, he had a reputation for being a veteran expert martial artist who was gifted in strength, and unrivaled amongst 6th Gate martial artists.

Also, what did he just say? Shock Gate?

At that moment, everyone turned their gaze onto Fang Yuan. They now began to look at him in fear.

"If that's what you think, then so be it!"

Fang Yuan gave a vague answer, making it difficult for others to comprehend.

In reality, he had already broken through the Shock Gate long ago. Had he failed to break through this gate with the help of the Questioning Heart Tea, it would be ridiculous and embarrassing.

'Anyway, in terms of cultivation and combat power, considering I could defeat this person, it seems like my martial prowess has reached the highest levels at least in Qinghe County?'

Fang Yuan thought to himself and checked his stats window.

"Name: Fang Yuan

Essence: 4.2

Spirit: 4.1

Magic: 3.0

Age: 19

Cultivation: [Martial Artist (7th Gate)]

Techniques: [Black Sand Palm (Grade 5)], [Eagle Claw Iron Skin Technique (Grade 7)]

Skills: [Medicine (Level 3)], [Botany (Level 3)]"

'In the blink of an eye. a year has passed, and I came from being a nobody into a highly skilled martial artist with miraculous healing skills...'

Fang Yuan thought to himself as he was flushed with a sense of accomplishment.

This massive advancement made by Fang Yuan affected Minister Lin greatly.

Looking at Fang Yuan, Minister Lin could only feel repeated waves of regret hitting him from inside, as though his heart was attacked by a venomous snake. It was excruciating for him.

Even though Lin Leiyue had Shi Yutong's blessings and the future of their sect seemed bright, it now appeared to be merely a hopeful expectation.

In terms of true power, reputation and position, Fang Yuan was no less inferior than Lin Leiyue.

Why was he so blind and wasteful to let go of such a desirable candidate?

He could only regret as it was too late.

Looking at the very impressed family head of the Zhang Family and the smug looking Zhou Wenwu, he felt very annoyed.

It seemed as though they were all ready to send the women in their own families to sleep with Fang Yuan to win his favour.

"An accomplished martial artist at such a young age!"

Lu Zhisen silently sighed. Looking at the frail and weak Elder Zhao lying next to him, he swallowed his pride and grudgingly dropped to his knees and begged, "Please try to save him divine healer! Should you want to dish out punishment, please just punish me!"

Seeing Lu Zhisen fall to his knees, and even Fang Yuan was moved.

Even though Lu Zhisen was a boorish fellow, it appeared even he had a soft side.

"Please recover!"

Waving his hand, Lu Zhisen involuntarily stood up almost immediately.

Fang Yuan continued to speak, "I shall forgive and forget your earlier transgression with what you have just done...Are you aware of my rules?"

For every person the divine healer in the deep valley healed, he demanded either a spiritual object or anything else that was valuable as payment.

"Yes! Of course!"

Lu Zhisen respectfully presented a silk booklet and said, "I obtained half of these random records. The materials inside include records by several renowned elders, as well as various stories of spiritual knights. Please accept this as payment!"

Chapter 55: Shaoyang City

"The Secluded Mountains Prefecture is one of the three prefectures in the country. It is also under the jurisdiction of the six counties, which Qinghe is a part of. It is home to several mysterious and special individuals..."

"In terms of martial arts, there are several talented spiritual knights, capable of fully mastering spiritual energy and lightness skill. Only the crème de la crème of martial artists can rival their skills..."

Fang Yuan sat cross legged as he prepared his tea.

The steam from the piping hot water simmered off once it came into contact with the cool surroundings as the stunning fragrance of the tea wafted out.

The small fireplace created a sense of comfort from the bitter cold environment.

It was a different experience reading his book in such an environment.

Elder Zhao from the Spirit Returning Sect suffered a life-threatening injury as he was hit by Gui Wusheng's Ghostly Claw and the Decomposition Toxins seeped into his bones. His condition was made worse by his internal injuries. However, with the combination of Fang Yuan's

Golden Needle Acupuncture and Yama's Talisman, Fang Yuan saved his life without a fuss.

After Elder Zhao's condition stabilised, Fang Yuan immediately sent off Lu Zhisen and the group of people who were thanking him profusely. He then began to read the book they gave him intently.

"Erm...in this journal, the time period is longer. Furthermore, the author's martial arts prowess is so advanced. It seems like he has reached the highest level of Wu Zong..."

After reading through the book once, doubts arose in Fang Yuan's mind.

Most importantly, the author recorded several legends regarding spiritual knights, traditional customs and even revealed some precious pieces of information regarding advanced martial arts. This pleasantly surprised Fang Yuan.

"I'm left with one remaining gate to clear to break through the 8th Golden Gates in the 12 Golden Gates. After I clear this, I must master the Yin and Yang energies for the 4 Heavenly Gates..."

Laying out the 12 Cultivation Levels of Initial, Rest, Life, Restriction, View, Pain, Shock, Death, Yin, Yang, Earth and Heaven in front of Fang Yuan, he only had five left to clear.

"At the 8th cultivation level, I must break through the Death Gate. At the 9th and 10th, I must master the Yin and Yang energies individually while at the 11th cultivation level I have to master combining yin and yang energies into one and to break through the 12th cultivation... At the 12th level, I must put in consistent effort in training to break through this level. After completing all these, I can finally get a taste of the exhilarating experience of being a martial artist of the highest level of Wu Zong..."

"Many gifted martial artists have failed at this stage but apparently after passing this stage one would enter an entirely different realm altogether. There are even changes in the form... for example, one would no longer train inner force but...elemental force!"

From these descriptions in the booklet, Fang Yuan was able to confirm that this author had already reached the Wu Zong level.

"According to him, it is only with the breaking of the Wu Zong and mastering of elemental force then one could be considered to be really set on the route of cultivation which can then be worthy of comparison with the spiritual knights and alchemy masters..."

While reading this particular paragraph of description, Fang Yuan sensed a hint of melancholy between the lines.

At this point, Fang Yuan's mood was also affected.

After all, it was extremely rare even for gifted martial artists who had renowned teachers to break through the 4 Heavenly Gates. Wu Zong was more about fate. Even if one were to train and prepare for his entire life, he also had to count on fate to succeed.

But as for spiritual knights and the like, they started training their elemental force straightway. Their strengths and abilities at the beginning were already on par with Wu Zong. This news could possibly disillusion several martial artists.

"In the first place nothing in this world is fair!"

Fang Yuan put down the booklet with a sigh. He was still very envious of spiritual knights and their kind, thinking, "Spiritual knights use elemental force and are able to manipulate nature, gaining the ability of Creation. For example, magical masters are able to arrange the key elements while alchemy masters can obtain the extremely beneficial essence from spiritual plants, grabbing the valuable fruits of nature. There are also the more mysterious dream masters....."

Fang Yuan no longer had further doubts about the martial arts route ahead of him before Wu Zong.

Fang Yuan was only slightly puzzled about how to become a spiritual knight.

"If we were to talk only about physical capabilities, there are not many people who are better than me I think. Especially in the aspect of magical energy..."

As for the honing of martial arts skills, it usually consisted of just building up and enhancing elemental energy. As for Fang Yuan's growth in the magical energy, he had the aid of the Questioning Heart Tea.

As for the requirements to become a spiritual knight, it seemed to be very similar to this magical energy.

Fang Yuan walked to the front of a bronze mirror and released all of his magical energy.

At that moment, the young man in the mirror looked incredibly vibrant and lively. He was almost shining with youth and vigour, like a luminous pearl in the night.

"Luminosity...magical energy of 3.0, and I can already accomplish something like that..."

Fang Yuan knew that it would be a pity if he did not attempt to train to be a spiritual knight with his current capabilities.

But becoming a spiritual knight was not a simple task. It required determination and will.

"When I leave this time, I have to also pay more attention to the details here..."

Fang Yuan made up his mind, but he was still slightly troubled.

As for all those spiritual knights, Qinghe Country was just a poor rural area. Even he had never heard about this area in the legends.

If he really wanted to find out, he had to travel out towards the Secluded Mountain Prefecture or even the capital of the country, maybe he had to even travel out of the country to search for it in order to have a glimmer of hope.

"Ow!!!"

After making up his mind, Fang Yuan got up walked to the garden and called out.

His voice reverberated around the valley and shook the ground.

"Chirp!"

"Keke!"

A big and small shadow from the sky and ground respectively

sped towards Fang Yuan. It was Flower Fox Ferret and Iron-tailed Black Eagle.

"I'm going to travel out for a long period of time, this secluded valley will now be under your charge!"

Fang Yuan caressed the small head of Flower Fox Ferret and tossed a bamboo fruit to Iron-tailed Black Eagle.

Taking his spiritual tea, spiritual rice, and bamboo fruit, he hid them in separate places within the vast and huge Clear Spirit Mountain. Given the vastness of the mountain, not many people would be able to uncover his hiding spots.

After harvesting the crops for the last time, Fang Yuan set a fire and burned all the Vermillion Jade Rice plants into ashes. The barren Questioning Heart Tea tree and spiritual bamboo that were left looked a bit conspicuous, but it was extremely difficult to notice them. It would be far more challenging for someone else to take advantage of their beneficial properties in their current state.

Furthermore, with the protection of the two spiritual beasts, Fang Yuan felt more assured.

...

Lieyang County.

This was a part out of the six counties in the Secluded Mountain Prefecture. It had always been the territory of the Five Ghosts Sect and a neighbour of Qingye County. As it had a few gigantic quarries, the county was economically powerful and looked more developed than Qinghe County.

Winter passed and spring set in.

Within Shaoyang City, people who rested during the bitter cold winter resumed transporting huge amounts of mineral ores again.

These mineral ores of Lieyang harnessed some form of Yang energy. It was the blacksmith's favourite material to add to their

works which included weapons. After the addition of these mineral ores through a unique process, the quality of the constructed weapons would be enhanced and maybe even transformed. It might also have some divine or holy properties. It was said that such weapons could defeat the most demonic entities and were thus known to be the divine and powerful weapons of magical troops.

Of course, this was just said in legends. However, the hard reality was that the demand for Lieyang mineral ores was far greater than its supply.

Furthermore, along the journey, the value of these mineral ores would increase along the way. By the time they reached the main mansion of the Secluded Mountain Prefecture, the price would increase by fifty percent. When they reach the capital of the country, the price would double. If one was willing to risk breaking the law and transporting it beyond the country's borders to faraway lands, the profits one could make would be almost uncountable. It was definitely enough for one to live the rest of his life in prosperity without having to work anymore.

However, several dangers and obstacles plagued this transportation route.

These merchants were only enticed by the sheer amounts of profits they could reap to take the risk of face the bandits and robbers along the way. They had to be brave, intelligent and extremely determined on their journey in order to succeed.

"Is this Shaoyang City?!"

As the horse carriage entered the gates of the city slowly, a jade-like hand pulled open the curtains and the person inside visually surveyed the different scenery the city held. The person was feeling incredibly excited.

"Miss, we have reached the inn!"

In front of the carriage stood a middle-aged man with a goatee. He looked like the hotel manager and at the same time, he also looked like he was the carriage driver.

"Great!"

The lady dismounted from the carriage. Her striking red robes incongruently stood out against the dull colours of her surroundings. Her eyes were glistening beautifully, but she covered half her face with a mask, eliciting looks of disappointment on those around her.

"Old Yu, thank you so much for putting on the disguise and for also being my carriage driver, it must have been hard for you!"

After entering the inn and requesting a suite, the lady removed her mask and revealed a gorgeous face. It was Lin Leiyue.

"I am honoured to work for you, Miss Lin!"

The middle-aged man smiled and wiped off the sweat from his face. The lines on his face changed drastically and he looked evidently more light-hearted.

If Fang Yuan was here, he would definitely find this man familiar. This was the man who forced Lin Yuanwai to back out of his marriage. He was the Cold-faced Iron Eagle, Yu Qiuleng!

"Elder Han has already notified us that he would link up with us as soon as possible to chase down Gui Wusheng!"

Lin Leiyue clapped her hands and a few skilled martial artists entered, ready to take orders.

"The Five Ghosts Sect has a mysterious background and they are unpredictable. When they were in Qinghe county they activated the spies they planted for many years. Their objective does not seem trivial. You are the elite spies of our sect in Shaoyang County, support Elder Han and my mission this time and find out the objective of the Five Ghost Sect!"

"Yes Madam!"

All the martial artists bowed respectfully.

"Good, Yan San, Ma Si, Hou Wu, Zheng Liu...Four of you guard the four doors in Shaoyang County. The martial artists of Five Ghosts Sect have recently been gathering in this city. Make sure you get to know each of them inside out!"

"Zou Jiu, you will..."

Lin Leiyue looked as though she was issuing operational orders in an army. Her last order was to Yu Qiuleng, "Old Yu, I will put you in charge of the deployments of the Five Ghost Sect in this area!"

"Rest assured, I will not fail you!"

Yu Qiuleng replied in arrogant tone; he was confident that he would succeed.

He had no reason to believe otherwise.

Since the last time, Yu Qiuleng had made massive improvements in his martial prowess. He was also promoted to an elder in his sect. His confidence was bolstered, and he was extremely satisfied. This time, he was tasked with escorting members of the sect on this mission. It was a huge responsibility, an indication of his bright future in the sect, thus explaining his confidence and high morale.

Seeing this, Lin Leiyue cautioned him, "The Five Ghosts Sect is as powerful as ours, do not be complacent!"

"Very well said Miss Lin, I will remember it!"

Yu Qiuleng waved as he replied. Judging from his cavalier attitude, Lin Leiyue knew then that he did not take her words seriously.

Chapter 56: Sparring

As days and hours gradually passed, the whole Shaoyang City instead became more heavily guarded. With such a serious and solemn atmosphere, even the ordinary folks could feel it.

Every day, there would always be people coming from Lieyang County. Even martial artists from other counties flooded the city daily.

Needless to say, the people who couldn't be left unmentioned, were the disciples of Five Ghosts Sect, constantly fighting and killing on the streets and in the alleyways, almost as if there was no stop to the violence and mayhem.

Along with this, was news that a treasure had been spotted in Shaoyang City. The news spread far and wide, attracting even more warriors to come forth to the city.

"There's a treasure in Shaoyang City? Some claimed to have seen its shine, sparkling in the sky, lasting for many years?"

Fang Yuan was riding a green donkey; upon hearing the exaggerated rumors, he broke into laughter.

"Those rumors must be fake."

Traveling beside him was a man 7 feet tall, body bursting with masculinity, as muscular as a bull.

"This was personally said by brother, it cannot be any less true!"

This huge man was carrying an axe the size of a door, with an air of ferocity around him, he said, "It seems like you're a kindred spirit, why not come join us at Cow Head Mountain? We can eat huge blocks of meat, drink giant bowls of wine, talk about gold and silver, how enjoyable will that be, ha ha!"

"Oh no oh no, Brother Wang, I am honoured by your offer and hospitality, but my martial arts skills are not up to par, so I think

I'll pass."

Fang Yuan discreetly rolled his eyes, unable to believe that this fool could be a mountain king.

He met this man on the road. After finding out that they both were heading to Shaoyang City, they had been traveling together ever since. His name, in particular, was very special. His surname was Wang and his first name was Fugui. The name Wang Fugui meant 'Rich King', and that already sounded like it belonged to a wealthy man.

From what Wang Fugui said, this Cow Head Mountain was also from Lieyang County and was supposedly very famous.

"Brother Wang, you're making the journey to Shaoyang City for the treasure too?"

Fang Yuan didn't want to talk about recruitment anymore and thus immediately changed the topic.

"We don't even know how the treasure looks like, even if we did, the experts will beat us to it, as if it's that easy to find it!"

A shrewd look flashed on Wang Fugui's face.

"Oh? I didn't think brother would be someone who understood the situation."

Fang Yuan was slightly surprised, "Then why are you heading to Shaoyang City?"

"Ha ha..."

Wang Fugui waved his hands in excitement and said, "Recently so many people are gathering in Shaoyang, and just as I was planning on gaining fame as a martial artist, I heard that Five Ghosts Sect has many senior martial artists here, even the junior ones are all here too! All I have to do is wait for a good opportunity to challenge them, beat them, and my name will spread throughout the lands. With such a good chance coming up, how could I miss

it?"

"Oh I see!"

Fang Yuan cupped his hands together, at least he finally understood what the big fuss was about, and how it could still attract so many martial artists to come too.

People from the world of martial arts weren't passive and were not willing to miss out on any action if they heard of it. Needless to say, add on the promise of treasure, even while knowing that there might be danger, they would just walk straight up to face it without fear.

"Brother, even though your martial arts skills are bad, but your medical prowess is unmatched! If you could join Cow Head Mountain, and work for Brother Wang, then 1 of the 5 important positions will be left for you!"

Ever since Wang Fugui personally saw Fang Yuan save a grandfather and grandson with medical techniques, he had been wowed and totally admired Fang Yuan's medical skills, wanting to recruit him into the group.

Unfortunately, Fang Yuan had no interest in being a mountain thief, and thus there wasn't much Brother Wang could do.

"We've reached Shaoyang City!"

His eyes lighted up upon seeing the building in the distance.

"Oh? There are martial artists fighting..."

Wang Fugui saw that in front of the gates of the city there was a circle of sabre wielding martial artists. There seemed to be people fighting in the centre of the circle. Upon seeing that, Fugui excitedly said, "Everyone out of my way!", as he headed towards the circle.

He was huge, hence it was good to be allied with him.

Occasionally some martial artists flashed fierce looks, but upon

seeing his body of steel, and the giant axe, they didn't dare to pass any comments. This allowed Fang Yuan to pass through easily.

As they entered the circle, it seemed like the battle was coming to an end.

The fight involved two martial artists, one old and one young. The old guy was graceful and had remarkable skills, but it was evident that he was already exhausted to his limit and was being forced to a corner by the younger guy.

"This youth had actually advanced to the 6th Gate, and became an inner force expert?"

Fang Yuan eyes flickered as he looked at the younger warrior.

He had nice eyebrows and a nice coloured skin. However, his face was extremely pale and he carried an aura of coldness. Wearing black, he was definitely a disciple of Five Ghosts Sect.

"Who's that?"

Fang Yuan saw Fugui's veins bulging in his neck, a look of eagerness on his face and was temporarily speechless.

"Ha Ha, looks like you're not from around here, you don't even know Ghost King!"

"Ghost King?"

Fang Yuan shrugged; he really haven't heard of this name before.

"This guy is one of the best disciples of Five Ghosts Sect! He was born gifted, at the age of 20 he obtained inner power and was able to break through the Pain Gate, being the first youth in Lieyang County to attain that!"

Wang Fugui's eyes never left the fight, and in acknowledgment he merely murmured.

"Oh..."

Fang Yuan was rendered speechless upon hearing his response.

Excluding himself, from the last time they met, even Lin Leiyue was still a few steps away from breaking through the Pain Gate. If this youngster had really done it then he would have set a new record.

With regards to the difference in skill between Leiyue and this youngster, oh well, Leiyue would have to commit suicide out of embarrassment.

After all, Ghost King was a merciless evil demon who managed to break through all 7 Gates in a year.

Fang Yuan was an intellectual, but was indifferent when it came to battles.

"Ghost King's martial art is graceful and elegant, just like how a spider spins its web, slowly but surely forcing its prey into a corner. The old man is already completely exhausted, its best if he surrenders early lest he suffers even more internal injuries."

"Five Moons Palm!"

Ghost King gave a shout, his right hand turning pale beyond measure, completely drained of colour, as he gracefully slid past the old man's defences and pressed his hand on the old man's chest.

"Argh..."

The old man's facial expression took a turn for the worse, as he rapidly staggered back, spitting out purplish black blood.

"Flying Crane has actually been defeated!"

"He is actually a renowned master of inner force in Lieyang County!"

"Seems like he's about to be replaced by the new generation of martial artists..."

"Ghost King's techniques are of such a high level, don't even talk about Lieyang County, even within Secluded Mountains

Prefecture, I doubt there's many who can match up to him..."

"Hey! Everyone listen up!"

Ghost King eyed the whole circle and proudly said, "Shaoyang City is Five Ghosts Sect's territory, anyone who has any thoughts about competing with us better think twice, or you'll end up just like this old man!"

Upon finishing his sentence, he gave a cold smirk. Surprisingly, he and the other disciples did not enter the city. They all got on horses and rode off to an unknown destination.

Wang Fugui waited until they were gone before he indignantly said, "Hmph...that bold attitude of his."

"If I wish my name to be renowned throughout the lands, all I have to do is go up, challenge them and win, am I right?"

Fang Yuan's eyes were filled with ridicule.

Wang Fugui had natural strength and had trained in the brute strength of the Cow Devil Technique till the 5th Grade. Usually, there were few martial artists that could match up with someone like that, but it turned out that a master of inner power was one of those who could.

Wang Fugui's face broke into a smile and rubbed his head in glee but the moment he saw the Flying Crane walking away, all expressions vanished instantly.

Under the shine of the setting sun, the back of Flying Crane seemed like a defeated hero, causing a tinge of sadness to suddenly hit Fang Yuan.

It seemed like Ghost King's display of power was very effective, striking fear into the circle of martial artists that were watching the fight. Having been shocked by Ghost King's prowess, they suddenly became less rowdy and entered the city in a quiet and orderly manner.

"Let's go! I'll bring you to Fragrance Bar for a drink or two."

After entering the city, Wang Fugui shrugged off all past feelings of sadness and said, "My drinking tolerance is unmatched in Cow Head Mountain, believe me, I'm not making it up!"

"Ha Ha...I have other matters to attend to, please excuse me!"

Although Fang Yuan wanted to personally see whether Fugui's claim was true, after considering his own alcohol tolerance, he knew he was only going to embarrass himself and thus left immediately.

"Oh? What matters are you referring to? Could you be going to meet some beautiful maiden?" Fugui teased.

Suddenly, a carriage stopped in front of them and its doors swung open, revealing a young maiden. "Brother Fang Yuan? Please come in!"

"You see! I really have matters to attend to!"

Fang Yuan rubbed his nose as he entered the carriage.

Wang Fugui stood there in a daze, only regaining his senses after a moment. Slapping his forehead, he said, "It's ok, Brother Fang Yuan really has matters to attend to, he didn't hide anything from me..."

Suddenly, he had a fit of anger, and scolded, "Choosing women over me? How can he leave Fugui alone here by himself! Hmph...I'll go drink wine by myself then."

"Maiden Lin! What a coincidence!"

The carriage had little room, and the air was filled with a fragrant smell.

Sitting opposite Fang Yuan was Maiden Lin. She had a peculiar look on her face as she gazed at Fang Yuan, leaving him confounded as to why she had such an expression.

Little did he know that Maiden Lin had failed before due to his

mistake, and was embarrassed really badly. But she chose not to tell him out of fear that the Spirit Returning Sect would come knocking at his door.

Upon hearing that Fang Yuan's greeting came with a hint of alienation, Maiden Lin's eyes flicked as she said delicately, "I heard that your medical skills have exceeded all expectations, and have surpassed even that of your mentor. I am in awe of your achievement, but I wonder, what brings you here? Surely you know that currently Shaoyang City is filled with danger?"

Fang Yuan curiously asked, "I've heard that there was a treasure in the city, and have decided to come take a look. As long as I don't get caught up in the hunt for the treasure there shouldn't be too much of a problem... Is that the reason why Maiden Lin is here too?"

Maiden Lin laughed, as she admitted, "This was supposed to be a secret but for some reason it has been leaked out to almost every city and county around here. Now the daily influx of warriors has increased to unbelievable amounts..."

Fang Yuan's eyes flashed, "Wasn't the rumour spread on purpose?"

Maiden Lin shook her head, "Although taking advantage of the chaos to reap benefits will be good, but I definitely will not want to do it on such a large scale."

"If that's the case, this will be interesting..."

Fang Yuan rubbed his chin, deep in thought.

Chapter 57: Suspicion

The horse carriage stopped at the back of the large mansion and immediately two martial artists dressed as servants stepped forward and respectfully drew back the curtains on the carriage.

"This place...seems to be the backyard of a house belonging to someone from the upper class..."

Upon hearing the muffled commotion from the front yard, Fang Yuan silently nodded.

Fang Yuan was already impressed when he saw the technique and skill behind the tricks done earlier. Seeing that of the Spirit Returning Sect, Fang Yuan was also convinced that the Spirit Returning Sect was indeed able to rival the veteran sects. Their influence in this area was no less remarkable.

"This is the secret base for our Spirit Returning Sect. Apart from the martial artists from our sect, Master Fang you are our first guest!"

Lin Leiyue broke into a gorgeous smile as she led the way in front.

After making their way through a few smaller doors, they arrived at a garden. The garden was intricately arranged and designed. Even though the cold winter had yet to pass, signs of life and growth were beginning to emerge.

Next to the clear green pond, a moustached martial artist was practising the Eagle Claw Technique.

"Whoosh whoosh!"

Accompanying each strike the martial artist made, the force pushed the air around him along while creating subtle sound effects. It was as though a pond of still water was being disturbed.

"Old Yu!"

Lin Leiyue made what appeared to be a casual greeting. However, Fang Yuan narrowed his eyes to this.

Was not this the Cold Faced Iron Eagle Yu Qiuleng? The same person who followed Minister Lin into the mountain and then forced himself to break off his engagement?

In the beginning, Fang Yuan thought Yu Qiuleng's martial prowess were formidable. After watching Yu Qiuleng, he did not seem that powerful after all.

It even seemed like Yu Qiuleng's Eagle Claw Technique was inferior to Fang Yuan's.

"Erm, you are?"

Yu Qiuleng gently nodded in acknowledgement towards Lin Leiyue. Looking at Fang Yuan, Yu Qiuleng felt a tingling sense of familiarity. Frowning his eyebrows, his eyes glistened all of a sudden as he remembered, "The guy from Qingye city?!"

At this moment, a tingle of hostility crept appeared on his face as he thought, "How dare he still pester Maiden Lin?!"

"It's a misunderstanding Old Yu!"

Upon seeing this, Lin Leiyue hurriedly explained, "I merely bumped into Master Fang along the way. Furthermore, he is an accomplished martial artist and is famous in Qingye city for his medical prowess..."

"Hmph, it might just be a scam..."

Yu Qiuleng dismissively snorted. Even though he has heard some rumours, he stubbornly refused to believe that this teenager from the mountains could accomplish so much. He might have killed Song Zhong and Elder Zhong, but it might be because they were already in a precarious position and Fang Yuan probably killed them by pulling off a trick or two.

At this point in time, Fang Yuan was not displaying his martial

prowess, and based on what Yu Qiuleng could see through his naked eye, he could not discern that Fang Yuan's capabilities were as good as what was being said.

"Oh? Looks like you do not like me very much?"

Fang Yuan laughed harmlessly, but there was a slight hint of anxiety in his eyes.

"Sir, reporting!"

At this moment, a disciple of the Spirit Returning Sect sprinted towards them with a messenger bird in hand, "We have just received Elder Han's message. He had already found the tracks of the elders from Five Ghosts Sect outside the city. Elder Han ordered us to reinforce them immediately!"

"This matter is of utmost importance, we will move off right now!"

Upon saying this, Lin Leiyue shot a pleading glance at Fang Yuan.

Seeing this, Fang Yuan decided not to mention the next training session he was thinking of suggesting.

Anyway, having seen Yu Qiuleng's pitch black face, he knew there would be trouble for him, so there was no hurry.

When an honourable man seeks revenge, waiting ten years to do so was not considered a long time. Even though he was not an honourable man, he could still wait a few days.

"Very sorry Master Fang, our sect needs to attend to a pressing matter!"

Lin Leiyue looked at Fang Yuan apologetically.

"Oh, it's alright, I shall take my leave then..."

Fang Yuan turned and prepared to leave.

"Do not let him leave!"

At this moment, Yu Qiuleng, who was remaining quiet,

remarked, "This man has heard the secrets of our sects, we cannot let him spread them"

Yu Qiuleng was originally intending to kill Fang Yuan to prevent him from leaking the sect's secrets.

However, as the Spirit Returning Sect was a proper and respectable sect, and with so many junior disciples present, he could not surface his suggestion.

"Master Fang, are you willing to follow Lin Leiyue?"

Instantly reacting, Lin Leiyue remarked "What a coincidence! Isn't this why I came?"

Fang Yuan chuckled as this was also on his mind.

"Alright, let's delay no further, we shall move out this instant! There is no need to leave anyone here anymore!"

Being a decisive person, Lin Leiyue left instantly. In no time, a group of people hurriedly exited the mansion and rushed towards a location in the mountains.

...

"Click Clack!"

The horses they rode took them at a blistering speed.

"Maiden Lin, can you tell me, what is the treasure you were talking about?"

Amidst the galloping of the horses, Fang Yuan's voice resonated clearly in Yu Qiuleng's ears. Fang Yuan's question alarmed Yu Qiuleng.

"Given what has occurred, Leiyue has nothing to hide. The treasure is said to be a piece of Yin Yang Jade!"

Ignoring the cautionary cough from Yu Qiuleng who was beside her, Lin Leiyue replied immediately.

"Yin Yang Jade?"

Fang Yuan was slightly confused. After a moment, he remembered reading about it in a journal somewhere. His eyes brightened as he thought, "Isn't Yin Yang Jade the item stated in legends that could merge the Yin and Yang energies and accelerate a martial artist's advancement in skills?"

After the 8 Gates of the path of a martial artist, it was the 4 Heavenly Gates!

Discounting the Earth and Heaven Gate, the Yin Gate and Yang Gate at the start precisely required the merging of the Yin and Yang energies!

This Yin Yang Jade was a famous treasure of generations. It was said that the jade was a natural gem which contained yin and yang energy and could immensely improve foundations of the martial artist. It was said that it could also break through the Yin and Yang Gates. It was indeed a much sought-after treasure.

A martial artist from the 4 Heavenly Gates could easily be one of the top five martial artists regardless whether he was in the Spirit Returning Sect or the Five Ghosts Sect!

This explained the importance placed on this treasure and the elaborate actions taken by the two big sects as well as many other martial artists to try to attain it.

"Obtaining this Yin Yang Jade is equivalent to reserving a spot in the ranks of highly powerful martial artists at 4 Heavenly Gates in the future..."

Fang Yuan nodded and glanced at Lin Leiyue.

It was obvious that this operation taken by the Spirit Returning Sect to obtain this treasure was most likely for Lin Leiyue.

However, Lin Leiyue was still injured which made Fang Yuan slightly unsure about who the treasure was for. He was even more incognisant if the person responsible for this was actually him.

'It is easy to defeat your external enemies, but difficult to

overcome your inner demons!'

Being aware of Fang Yuan's gaze, appearing to be slightly embarrassed, Lin Leiyue lowered her head. She was however thinking, "To defeat my inner demons and take down my enemy's strong points, it was originally sufficient for any of the elders to defeat Brother Fang in front of me. However, Elder Han's report came all of a sudden and I was unable to adapt my plan in time. Fortunately Elder Han is present, it might even be easier to accomplish the mission!"

Elder Yan and Elder Han were the left and right pillars of the Spirit Returning Sect. Both were top martial artists of the 4 Heavenly Gates!

"The Little Frost Mountain is right here!"

A junior disciple who arrived at the entrance to the mountain dismounted immediately. He summoned a messenger bird and nodded at Lin Leiyue.

"Dismount and enter the mountain!"

Lin Leiyue did not hesitate. Her will at this point in time was indomitable.

"Move!"

Yu Qiuleng took the initiative and led the way. At the same time, he shot a provoking glare at Fang Yuan.

After all, in the dense and old forests in this mountain, an "accident" would, after all, be quite a common occurrence.

Although it seemed like nothing would happen at that point in time, should they get into a fight with the people from the Sect of the Five Ghosts, some fratricide might be inevitable.

However, after entering the mountain, Fang Yuan's behaviour caused Yu Qiuleng to view him in a different light.

The path was filled with multiple boulders and blocked by thorny

plants...

In the true old forests in the deep mountains, there was not even a path to follow. Even for veteran martial artists, it was extremely difficult for them to navigate.

The people brought out by the Spirit Returning Sect were all respectable martial artists who could still manage the difficulty of the path. Yu Qiuleng was trying his best to conceal his discomfort as he waited to ridicule any mistake made by Fang Yuan.

Fang Yuan was still patient and uncomplaining. He did not seem to slow down by the natural obstacles and looked more at ease and comfortable in his surroundings than Yu Qiuleng. As he moved swiftly through the obstacles, he casually enquired, "Do the communication methods used by your sect still work in an area like this? Also, are there any more instructions given by Elder Han?"

"The methods of our sect are impeccable!"

Yu Qiuleng replied grudgingly.

He was shocked at Fang Yuan's bravery as well as his remarkable Lightness Skill. However, even then Yu Qiuleng convinced himself that Fang Yuan's ability was only limited to his slightly superior Lightness Skill.

It must be acknowledged, that once someone has made up his mind about a certain issue, it would be extremely difficult to convince him otherwise.

"Rustle rustle..."

Suddenly, everyone emerged from the dense jungle into a clearing.

They saw a valley ahead of them and messenger bird circling in the air, emitting ear piercing cries.

"Elder Han is right in the valley, follow me to see him!"

Yu Qiuleng took the lead and entered without hesitation.

Fang Yuan surveyed the hills on both sides and tensed up his brows. He touched an object in his robes, took a deep breath and entered the valley.

"Where is Elder Han?"

After walking a few metres, Lin Leiyue surveyed the thin fog around them. She instantly asked, "Why have we not sent out a message? This area gives me a bad feeling. We cannot be careless, let's retreat from this valley!"

"This....."

Just as Yu Qiuleng was about to speak, the swooshing of arrows flying continuously sounded.

Arrows flew from the opposite end.

"Ah!"

Some disciples who were hit dropped to the floor instantly. They died almost immediately after exclaiming and black blood flowed from their wounds.

"It's a trap!"

Lin Leiyue drew her long sword and ordered, "Retreat!"

Fortunately for them, they did not enter too deep into the valley and were thus not fully entrapped. After an exhausting escape, they found they had lost half of their original manpower.

"The arrow tips are poisoned!"

Thinking about the earlier scenes, Yu Qiuleng broke out in cold sweat.

Had he continued to advance into the valley, they would have been attacked from all sides. Under the shower of that many arrows, their martial prowess did not matter as they would all be killed by the sheer number of poisoned arrows.

"It's a surprise you are able to discover my location, no doubt you are a talented disciple of the Spirit Returning Sect!"

A feminine looking young man, accompanied by an applauding bunch of disciples from the Five Ghosts Sect, emerged arrogantly and slowly from the valley.

"Caw caw!"

The circling messenger bird automatically landed on his arm obediently. This caused colour of Yu Qiuleng's face to become worse than that of a corpse. "How is this possible?"

"Haha... Let me reveal to you, as long as it's not a spiritual beast, it cannot resist the influence of the Temptation Pellet!"

Fang Yuan met this young man before. He was Lin Huang.

At that moment, Lin Huang drew out a pink pellet and fed it to the messenger bird. He shook his head in disappointment and said, "Had you guys entered the trap fully, all of you would have been dead and I would not need to do anything. Now I must come out of the valley to ensure my job is done. Tell me... the method by which you all would like to die by?"

Lin Huang visually surveyed the body language of Yu Qiuleng and Lin Leiyue. Initially slightly aggressive, Lin Huang became calmer but began to verbally provoke them, "Isn't this legendary psychic who is also the beloved student of Shi Yutong? Hehe... If I capture you, wouldn't this make the Spirit Returning Sect beg?"

"Dream on!"

Yu Qiuleng let out a thunderous roar and launched himself at Lin Huang with the immense energy of a hawk.

It was clear to him that in their unfavourable situation, the only way to turn the odds around was to bring the fight to Lin Huang himself.

Chapter 58: Defeat

"Eagle Claw!"

Qiuleng was a calm person but was not known for being submissive. Despite being surrounded by enemies, he was still constantly thinking of ways to turn the tables on them.

He recognized Lin Huang, who was the favourite disciple of Five Ghosts Sect's Sect Head, and the head of all disciples. His power and position would be equal to Lin Leiyue's. Even though he has heard of Lin Huang breaking through the 6th Gate, but when it came to experience, there was no way Lin Huang could surpass him!

If he could retaliate in one move, he might even win the battle!

By then, Qiuleng's Eagle Claw Technique was at full force, it was as if he was an eagle circling high above, and black-coloured eagle claws came crashing down like a thunderstorm. The two disciples by Lin Huang's side let out a scream, and instantly flew backwards from the attacks.

"Alright! Everyone stop!"

Lin Huang burst into laughter. His right hand turned pale and flexible, as if it had no bones inside and is drained of all blood, and made the next move. "Five Yin Hand!"

"Bang!"

Qiuleng's Eagle Claw and Lin Huang's Five Yin Hand came in contact. There was a change in Qiuleng's expression, and he flew back instantaneously.

Lin Huang's feet shifted at lightning speed and floated towards him like a ghost. "Leaving? How about seeking permission from my Ghost Shadow Steps first!"

His footsteps became unpredictable, and suddenly he was right

by Qiuleng's side, with fingers black as ink. "Ghost Claw!"

"Splat!"

Lin Huang's reached out with fingernails like jade pieces emitting a hint of evil. With a twist of his hand, both of Qiuleng's hands retracted back quickly as if he got bitten by a snake. Before he knew it, there was a mark on his chest.

"Puff!"

Qiuleng's facial expression shifted again, as he spat out a mouthful of blood and fainted on the ground. His face slowly turned black, and the 5 punctures on his chest spouted out blood as black as ink.

Within the mere exchange of a few moves, Spirit Returning Sect's last hope was defeated!

After witnessing the difference between both competitors, Leiyue was lost for words, as if her heart was hanging over a cliff.

"Cold Iron Eagle Yu Qiuleng? Is that all there is? How is your Eagle Claw compared to my Ghost Claw?"

Lin Huang's laughter was filled with disdain, and his eyes swept the room coldly. "Apart from Lin Leiyue, everyone else who is irrelevant is to be killed with no exceptions!"

"This Lin Huang seems to have concealed his flaws quite well..."

A thought flashed by Fang Yuan's mind as he saw this scene. "This martial art seems to be of higher level than what was displayed before... Being ruthless and evil, and only one step away from Shock Door, what a character. In due time, it is not impossible that he could become extraordinary, unfortunately..."

Regardless of right or wrong, he could not possibly just offer up his head to someone who wanted to 'kill all with no exceptions'.

There was also Yu Qiuleng.

"Initially I was thinking of finding an opportunity to teach you all

a lesson, but judging from the situation, if this drags on, this person might just die from his injuries... Save me some trouble, may peace be with you!"

Even up till then, Fang Yuan still had the mood to think of irrelevant things. He took a big step forward, pushed both his hands out, and the few Five Ghosts Sect disciples who were charging towards him flew backwards.

"Eh?"

Lin Huang seemed a bit taken aback. "An inner force expert? You aren't from Spirit Returning Sect?"

"Hmm... Not really, but it seems like you still won't let me go!"

Fang Yuan shrugged his shoulders. "Where is Elder Han?"

"Obviously that Old Hag Han is under the control of our sect's experts, no need to count on him to save you all!"

Lin Huang looked at Fang Yuan's young face signifying his tender age, and felt a wave of anger surge through his chest. He licked his lips and said, "With your talent, you have definitely surpassed Lin Leiyue. I didn't expect Qinghe County to harbour such a young talent! What a pity that you can't live past today..."

"Oh really? Unfortunately, I am always one to disappoint!"

When Fang Yuan heard that, he tried his best to stifle his laughter.

Leiyue looked at these two about to battle, her fists tightly clenched, and her eyes filled with worry. "Fang Yuan may be an expert in inner power martial arts, but he just advanced to his current level. Lin Huang is far more experienced than him, not to mention that he has Five Ghosts Sect's support when it comes to divine power and techniques. Fang Yuan is but a mere commoner, so what good techniques could he have? Even Elder Yu lost! There really isn't much hope..."

She clearly knew that even if there was Lin Huang as the only opponent, based on the huge difference in their powers of Inner Force and Power, he could defeat all of them one by one. Thus, escaping was definitely not an option.

A group attack? There were far more Five Ghosts Sect's disciples on the other side than there are us, with even bigger weapons like bows and arrows!

Thus, their only hope would be Lin Huang being defeated and captured during a solo fight.

It's just... Was that even possible?

Lin Leiyue looked at Fang Yuan's back silhouette, her heart filled with mixed feelings and emotions, with a tinge of anticipation that couldn't be explained.

"Young Master, just kill them on the spot. Is there really a need for you to be directly involved?"

A man dressed in black beside Lin Huang waved his hand, and more than ten Five Ghosts Sect disciples appeared with bows and arrows. A sense of danger washed through Lin Leiyue's heart.

"That would be unnecessary, this is our fight, no one is to interfere!"

Lin Huang shook his head, as he looked at Fang Yuan with a glimmer in his eyes.

This was not his arrogance talking. It was apparent that when martial arts were being competed with inner force, even if they were unable to handle the archers, they could still retreat back into the woods. They could use both offensive and defensive strategies. If they started fighting like guerrillas, they might even be able to kill a few of them, and that would be rather troublesome.

Especially if all the arrows were fired at the same time and all the low-level disciples were killed, the opponent would have less to worry about and could escape immediately, sabotaging the

mission.

The only chance would be using Lin Leiyue's disciples as bait, forcing Fang Yuan to engage in a battle with him.

Lin Huang had confidence in his own skills, even Yu Qiuleng lost to him in combat, how much threat would a 6th Gate martial artist, that had only recently advanced, be?

"Alright, you may begin!"

Fang Yuan stood in the arena, his spiritual energy however was continuously focused on his surroundings.

By now, the yin poison had already entered Yu Qiuleng's bones, and he had reached the point of no return. He waved his hand, inviting Lin Huang to make the first move.

"You should know that I'm one to bear grudges!"

Initially Lin Huang was not keen on talking, and wanted to change the topic of conversation to stall for time. All it took was one look for him to know that even the gods were unable to save Yu Qiuleng now.

Fang Yuan was far from ready to let this incident go, considering how Lin Huang just had ill intentions towards them.

But right now, his actions and appearance indicated that he did not consider Lin Huang as a threat at all!

This blatant act of 'disregarding' immediately angered Lin Huang.

Considering himself as the best, this behavior was completely unacceptable.

"You're dead meat!"

Protruding veins appeared on Lin Huang's forehead, even his usually pale skin reddened due to his anger. He floated forward like a ghost and thundered, "Five Yin Hand!".

"Swoosh!"

Fang Yuan glanced at him from aside, and flicked his right hand.

"Swoosh!"

Amidst the flow of air and friction, the cry of a hunting eagle was heard.

Lin Leiyue closed her eyes, it was as if she saw a handsome spiritual bird, with both wings extended, gliding down gracefully with its sharp claws out!

An Eagle Claw executed with both its shape and spirit!

Compared to this Eagle Claw, Yu Qiuleng's version was just child's play!

"Crack!"

A loud bone-breaking sound was heard.

With a loud cry, Fang Yuan held onto Lin Huang's right arm and twisted it into an unnatural position, and he promptly fell to the ground and passed out immediately.

Defeated in just one move!

Master Lin Huang, the treasured disciple of Five Ghosts Sect's master, an expert in Inner Power, the champion of Lieyang County's teenage martial artists, defeated in just one move?

With such a stark difference between the two battles, both the Spirit Returning Sect and the disciples of Five Ghosts Sect were lost for words, left in disbelief.

"Fang Yuan... became this powerful?"

Lin Leiyue let out a sigh, and she felt as though the shadow he left in her heart had enlarged yet again. It was as if there was a huge storm cloud weighing her down, and it kept growing.

"Young Master... lost?!"

"Quick! Save Young Master!"

All the Five Ghosts Sect disciples were at a loss.

Seizing the opportunity, Fang Yuan lunged at the archers. Like a tiger leaping into a herd of sheep, with a few casual swings of his hand, the archers flew out one by one, and passed out on the floor.

"Nice!"

As much as there was bitterness in her heart, Leiyue was elated by watching how the tables had turned. "Catch them all, especially that young master!"

"This isn't good, Young Master... Elder Yu... is dead!"

A Spirit Returning Sect disciple was about to help Yu Qiuleng up, however upon seeing his complexion and checking his breath, the disciple's expression changed drastically and he started screaming maniacally.

"What?"

Lin Leiyue's body stumbled backwards.

This ambush cost them an elder, so even if they did catch Lin Huang, it was very probable that they would be punished when they got back.

However, it was right then that something unexpected happened!

Amongst the Five Ghosts Sect disciples, a dark shadow lunged out at lightning speed towards Fang Yuan. With a wave of his hand, several Frozen Stars appeared instantaneously.

"Zip!"

The concealed weapons broke through the air, and there was a huge amount of power focused onto the concealed weapons. It was obvious that an inner force expert had launched it.

There was another elder hiding among the Five Ghosts Sect disciples!

Facing this kind of situations, even if the Spirit Returning Sect

elders were to come forward, as long as it was not Elder Yan, Elder Han or Shi Yutong, that person was bound to lose.

It was just bad luck for the other party to go against Fang Yuan!

Fang Yuan's magical energy had already reached level 3', and with enough attentiveness, no one nearby would be able to conceal their actions from him!

"Haha... I've been waiting for you for a long time!"

With a loud laugh and no time to spare, he folded up his sleeves and caught the concealed weapons and tossed them out fiercely.

This might sound simple, but without precise control of the body's inner force, it would be nearly impossible to execute that move.

The Five Ghosts Sect elder who appeared was obviously a lot better than Lin Huang.

"You should be lying on the ground too!"

Fang Yuan however was indifferent. After taking away the concealed weapons, he lunged at the black shadow with a claw.

Grade 7 Eagle Claw Iron Skin Technique, with Black Sand Palm!

"Bam!"

The surrounding trees were shaking, countless leaves and branches came showering down.

A gush of blood spurted out, but it was not from Fang Yuan, but from the body of the Five Ghosts Sect elder who suddenly appeared!

"You... broke through the Shock Door, and are at the peak of the 7th Gate!"

With a trembling voice, he exclaimed. The dark shadow fell to the ground, exposing an elderly face, with blood flowing out of his nostrils and mouth.

"What? The 7th Gate?"

Lin Leiyue covered her lips, all thoughts of her fighting for power with Fang Yuan instantly flew out of the window.

After all, the Shock Door could only be attempted when the martial artist's magical energy had peaked, there were no shortcuts for it.

Even the most talented martial artists had to train for a few years, maybe even more than a decade! It was not rare to see people training their whole lives, but still unable to break through the gate.

But Fang Yuan broke through it in such a short period of time?

By now he had not even reached his 20s. With such talent, he could really be considered a demon!

Chapter 59: Gui Wusheng

Silence!

The silence was deafening!

Not a single person made a sound. It was as if they were choked by a noose.

What happened just now?

The rising star of the Five Ghosts Sect, Lin Huang, a Martial Artist (Grade 6), was struck by Fang Yuan's Eagle Claw. It was uncertain if he lived.

An elder of the Sect, who was more highly-skilled, was similarly struck down like a fly.

"Could it be that he is the old monster in disguise?"

Even Lin Leiyue was shocked and looked at Fang Yuan differently.

"Yin Wujiu?!"

She stepped forward and exclaimed again.

"Yin Wujiu? Who is that?"

Fang Yuan asked.

Lin Leiyue looked on in horror, "He is an elder of the Five Ghosts Sect and was fellow disciples with Gui Wusheng. He had long surpassed the 7 gates but was unable to break through the Death Gate. He is extremely cruel and legend has it that he single-handedly kill all his enemies, leaving no one behind..."

"Given his character and martial arts skill, I am afraid he would never be able to break through the Death Gate. It would be the correct decision not to attempt it..."

Fang Yuan shook his head.

The Death Gate was the last of the Three Perilous Gates. Failure

to break through the gate would result in death! There was no doubt that most highly-skilled practitioners were stuck at this gate.

After all, who would dare to gamble their life?

"Gui Wusheng... This name sounds familiar..."

Fang Yuan furrowed his brows.

"Gui Wusheng is even more skilled than his junior. He was a martial artist that had broken through the Death Gate. He is the leader of the group of Five Ghosts Sect's martial artists in Qingye City and ranked top 5 in the Five Ghosts Sect!"

Lin Leiyue wanted to roll her eyes. She explained.

"This man's Ghostly Dark Claw is very powerful!"

Upon hearing this, Fang Yuan remembered that the elder of the Spirit Returning Sect that he had treated was wounded by Gui Wusheng.

"Luckily, it is not Gui Wusheng leading the troops, if not..."

Lin Leiyue shooked her head.

"Haha...cough cough..."

At this time, Yin Wujiu, who was collapsed on the floor, laughed and spat out a mouthful of fresh blood, "My senior...would not forgive you!"

"Cut the crap!"

Fang Yuan use his left hand and pressed against the old man's skull, "Where is the Yin Yang Jade? What is the Five Ghosts Sect up to?"

"Crack!"

Yin Wujiu lost his courage as he felt the Eagle Claw's strength increasing.

While Fang Yuan was a free-lance martial artist who did not

belong to a particular sect, he was still rather carefree and cavalier. Furthermore, given his age, the typical hot-headedness of a young man like him meant that he could kill Yin Wujiu if he were provoked into a fit of rage. Even if people attempted to avenge him, it would not bring Yin Wujiu back to life.

"This matter had always been anchored by my senior. I am not too sure..."

Yun Yujie laughed bitterly, "All I know is that the Yin Yang Jade does exist...furthermore..."

"Enough!"

A loud explosion echoed in the valley.

"Hmmm?"

Fang Yuan lifted his head, "A highly-skilled opponent?!"

A man's shadow appeared in the ravine.

His beard was white and his eyes were like that of a hawk's. As he walked, the surrounding fog warped around him.

"Gui...Gui Wusheng!"

Lin Leiyue's face turned deathly pale.

The martial arts techniques of the Five Ghosts Sect were mostly Yin in nature. Long-term practitioners often suffered negative side effects to their appearances, causing some to look like zombies.

However, looking at Gui Wusheng's robust features, it was obvious that he had overcome the restraints and reverted those negative side effects.

"He had definitely broken through the Death Gate and is only one step away from the 4 Heavenly Gates!"

The immense pressure caused Lin Leiyue to retreat. She looked at Fang Yuan's unyielding posture and feared for him.

"Senior?!"

Yin Wujiu's voice was fearful instead of grateful when he saw Gui Wuzheng.

"Hmmm!"

Gui Wusheng exclaimed, "Useless fellow! If I had not come forward, would you even betray our master?"

"Cough cough..."

Fang Yuan coughed, "Are the two of you done?"

"Unbelievable...It is truly unbelievable..."

Gui Wusheng examined Fang Yuan and said, "To think that a young lad of your calibre is here in my valley! It looked like I did not make a wasted trip here!"

"You overestimate me!"

Fang Yuan concentrated and realized the gap in power between Gui Wusheng and him.

While the Death Gate might appear to be insurmountable, it was still possible to break through it.

Furthermore, his stats were increasing at a rate that Gui Wusheng could not match due to his consumption of spiritual rice every day.

He also had a few tricks up his sleeves. As such, he did not fear Gui Wusheng.

Gui Wusheng was even more intrigued when he saw how composed Fang Yuan was. He exclaimed, "Good! You are able to keep your composure in front of me. That is hard to find. Which sect are you from? If you are not from any sect, why not join the Five Ghosts Sect? I can guarantee that you would be treated similarly to me!"

He was experienced and recognized that Fang Yuan did not belong to any sect.

Lin Leiyue's heart fell when she heard what Gui Wusheng said.

"Enter the Five Ghosts Sect?"

Fang Yuan appeared to seriously consider the offer before shaking his head, "Sorry, I am not interested. It would be kind of you if you would tell me the location of the Yin Yang Jade. I would be so grateful..."

"Sigh... What a shame!"

Gui Wusheng sighed with his hands placed behind his back.

"Oh? Why is that so?"

Having undergone 10-odd years of being nurtured by Master Wenxin, Fang Yuan had long treated him as a teacher and a father. There was no way Fang Yuan would destroy that relationship by joining another sect.

"It is a shame that you have to die today even though you are young and talented!"

Gui Wusheng's face was sinister, "Die!"

"Boom!"

His words overflowed with power. It was as if there was the clap of thunder directly beside his opponent's ears.

Lin Leiyue paled. Fresh blood trickled from her ears.

"What a technique! If Fang Yuan was complacent, he would not live!"

Lin Leiyue immediately turned her attention to the scene as soon as she regained her senses. What she saw surprised her.

It was impossible to follow the fight with the naked eye. All she could see were flashes of two shadows fighting each other.

"The Eagle Claw Iron Skin Technique?"

Gui Wusheng gazed at Fang Yuan's torn sleeves and cuts on the arms, his face turned dark.

The technique Gui Wusheng had just used was capable of disabling a Martial Artist (7th Gate) momentarily and could ensure a swift victory by following up with a decisive strike. It was not easy even for a Martial Artist (7th Gate) to counter it. Gui Wusheng had once used this tactic to kill a Martial Artist (7th Gate).

He was therefore shocked when he saw that Fang Yuan was unaffected by the technique and even engaged him in battle immediately. Furthermore, Fang Yuan's Iron Skin Technique was perfect. There was no way Gui Wusheng could kill him in a single strike.

"Not bad! This is indeed the Iron Skin!"

Fang Yuan let out a deep breath. He looked at his surroundings and realized that the disciples of the Spirit Returning Sect and the Five Ghosts Sect had not recovered.

Gui Wusheng's technique was a psychological attack which tested one's magical energy!

Fang Yuan was not afraid of any martial artist in this aspect. His vigorous magical energy allowed him to instantly recover from Gui Wusheng's technique.

He would have been able to put Gui Wusheng at a severe disadvantage if he had learnt the methods to counter the attack on magical energy.

As it was, Gui Wusheng was shocked.

He looked at Fang Yuan's youthful face and could only think of 1 word: Monster. It would be best to get rid of those talented enemies as soon as possible.

Gui Wusheng did not hesitate any longer. In a flash, he created multiple shadow clones and rushed forward. Throwing his palms outwards, he conjured a whole sky full of black blood-thirsty bats.

"18 Black Bats Palm!"

Yin Wujiu let out a surprised gasp as he recognized that this was Gui Wusheng's trump card. He could not believe it.

He would never imagine that his senior, who had broken through 8 Gates, would use such a technique and all his energy against the youth facing him.

"Good move!"

Fang Yuan shouted. His Iron Skin technique formed an armour-like protection beneath his skin and acted as another layer of protection.

His arms had turned black with the sheen of metal. His palms started to emit the poison of the Pearl Tail Snake!

"Gui Wusheng had forced him to give his all with his relentless attacks!"

"Eagle Air Strike!"

"Whoosh!"

Lin Leiyue stumbled back a few steps amidst the strong gust. She was already in a daze.

From her perspective, she saw a majestic eagle charging straight into the wall of ravenous bats and took them head-on.

This level of battle had greatly outstripped her capabilities as well as that of the disciples in the Spirit Returning Sect.

Even those highly-skilled martial artists from the Five Ghosts Sect could be killed by the ghost bats if they were to enter the battle.

As such, all they could do was to watch the two high-leveled martial artists battle as they moved deeper into the dense forest.

"What should we do....without the head of the sect?"

A disciple of the Spirit Returning Sect asked as he looked at the wake of destruction caused by Fang Yuan and Gui Wusheng.

"We..."

Lin Leiyue looked on.

At the moment, Lin Huang was unconscious. With Yin Wujiu heavily wounded, the Five Ghosts Sect no longer had any skilled masters. The sect's power and influence were greatly diminished.

Her side was the same with Yu Qiuleng gravely wounded.

She secretly rejoiced that she brought Fang Yuan along which had prevented the downfall of her fellow disciples in the sect.

"We..."

Lin Leiyue walked away before suddenly turning around and drawing her sword, "Kill!"

"Swoosh!"

A disciple of the Five Ghosts Sect who did not manage to dodge in time had his throat slit open and he toppled over.

"If we are leaving, we might as well kill Lin Huang and Yin Wujiu!"

The remaining disciples of the Spirit Returning Sect and the Five Ghosts Sect plunged into battle following Lin Leiyue's outcry...

Chapter 60: Winning

A few screams were heard along the main road.

"Aahh, my face. Don't hit my face! Aahh!!"

"Stop hitting, I will give you all the money!"

"You are a good man so please spare me! Spare me please!"

.....

These few rookies who had just integrated into the world of martial arts were bruised badly. The few of them handed over everything that they had.

"Isn't this better now? This whole area belongs to me...."

Wang Fugui happily showed his superiority and punched the young martial artist who talked back to him previously. He then took a gold and silver-thread pouch from him and stopped as his was satisfied with what he had gotten. He then said, "You all are considered lucky today. If you all were at my Bull's Head Mountain, you few weaklings would have lost a few of your own....Now get out of here!"

He lifted his leg and kicked an unlucky one who fled the slowest. That unlucky one rolled and crawled and was wishing so badly that he should have been born without his legs.

"Tut Tut....."

After they fled, Wang Fugui counted how much he had gotten and was satisfied. "There are so many easy targets right here....Plus, many of them are rich. Unfortunately, I can't relocate my home to this place...."

"Hehe! I can buy myself a few drinks at the brothel again today!"

Wang Fugui played with the coin pouch and wondered, "Not really sure where Brother Fang Yuan is now...."

However, when he was on his way back home, he saw a group of martial artists running towards him angrily. The ones leading the group were the few young ones he bullied just now.

"That's him, the tanned one. Don't let him escape!"

The few bruised young ones looked at him and their eyes were filled with anger.

"Woah, time to run!"

Wang Fugui immediately ran in the opposite direction and retreated into a nearby jungle under the hot pursuit of the group of martial artists.

Even though their lightness skill were not that great, they were all trained in martial arts and had a great amount of physical strength. Hence, it didn't take a long time for them to catch up in the jungle.

"F*ck!"

Wang Fugui cursed while he escaped frantically. "If I was near the Bull's Head Mountain now, they would have lost me....and I could even request a group of men to help me. This place here is so deserted and it is difficult to even find one who can lend a helping hand right now.... Damn....."

He cursed halfway and stopped suddenly with his eyes wide open.

Two people appeared right in front of him with a speed that was not easily distinguished by a naked eye. The two swiftly cleared the nearby trees to make a pathway.

"This is not good!"

Looking at how powerful those two were, Wang Fugui gave a weird cry and rolled clumsily out of the way.

"Kill him!"

"Don't let that evil thief get away!"

While Wang Fugui managed to dodge out of the way, the group who were chasing him ran straight into the danger he dodged to avoid.

"Whiz! Whiz!"

Silhouette sped past with immense forces!

A few screams were then heard. Many of the martial artists were sent flying about as they spat out blood from their pale faces.

"Aahh.... Old Zhong is seriously injured!"

"Even a [Martial Artist (6th Gate)] with inner power is also badly injured...."

"Please spare us! Please spare us!"

"Don't come any further.....Aahh...."

....

No matter how much they pleaded for mercy, the silhouettes ruthlessly ignored their desperate pleas and finished them off gruesomely.

Their deaths were considered to be of slightly useful as it slowed down the two silhouettes. One of them was a white-haired old man who was exhausted. He stepped on one of the heads of the dead martial artists and propelled himself off the ground. The force from this pushed the head down into the chest of the dead body.

"Gui Wusheng.....don't you dare to escape!"

Then came the voice of a young man. A pair of arms reached out ferociously for the figure in front. It seemed as if though the pursuer was very determined to rip the person in front to shreds.

"This figure.....this voice....Why do both features seem so similar to Brother Fang Yuan's?"

Wang Fugui spat out the grass that went into his mouth and stared on in awe.

At that moment, one of the survivors from behind exclaimed.

"Hold on a second! Gui Wusheng! Could he be that famous elder from the Five Ghosts Sect and who was an expert in Death Gate?!"

"Look at how murderous he is, who else could it be other than him? He looks like he has broken through the 4 Heavenly Gates....."

"But it looked like he was at a disadvantage.....my goodness. I wonder who was the one that was chasing him?"

A few of the young martial artists lost their limbs while some of them were still spitting out blood and in shock. A strong man carrying an axe came to them and mocked them. "I know the person who was chasing the old man. However, you all don't have to know as you all are going to be dead soon....."

.....

"Black Sand Eagle Claw Palm!"

"Ghostly Dark Claw!"

In the mountains, the scenery objects on both sides were destroyed.

Fang Yuan's eyes focused and he fluttered forward suddenly. Once again, he duelled with Gui Wusheng.

"Bang!"

It was incredibly powerful but it was not as destructive as before.

Both of them were now near their limits.

However, in actual fact, the opponent was an expert and he deliberately caused Fang Yuan to overexert much of his inner strength.

Just that every time this happened, Fang Yuan would swallow down a bamboo fruit quickly. His essence, spirit and magic would then recover immediately.

The spiritual bamboo fruit not only helped in the growth of spiritual beasts, it also helped in recovering one's essence, spirit and magic. This was one of the backup moves Fang Yuan prepared this time.

"This again!"

Gui Wusheng was extremely depressed to see his inner strength being exhausted and while Fang Yuan was recovering so quickly.

From the start, he was suppressing the cunning Fang Yuan. However, Fang Yuan was well trained in martial arts and was difficult to deal with. Fang Yuan also had the spiritual medicine which allowed him to recover quickly. Hence the fight dragged on and on for nearly 3 days!

Even though Gui Wusheng brought some pills as well, how could those pills be compared to the phoenix's bamboo fruit? The bamboo fruit was definitely way more superior.

In the beginning, it was Fang Yuan who was escaping from Gui Wusheng. Now, it was the other way round.

Also, if Fang Yuan managed to catch up this time, Gui Wusheng would be dead!

"What a cunning lad indeed. From the start, he pretended that he was not my enemy and led me into the mountains to prevent me from calling for help.....Luckily there are signs of human habitation here, which suggest that the city should be nearby..."

Even so, Gui Wusheng had to admit that he started to become fearful of Fang Yuan during the fight.

Fang Yuan couldn't be defeated easily and could recover so quickly. If he was not a monster then what was he?

Even if Gui Wusheng managed to escape today, it would be hard to say whether he would even want to take revenge on Fang Yuan in the future.

"Now!"

Fang Yuan's eyes focused.

His abundant magical energy allowed him to feel a drop in Gui Wusheng's vitality.

It was similar to a string breaking when stretched past its limit.

At that moment, Gui Wusheng was reaching near his limit. However he still had a glimpse of hope, but it was this hopeful thought that brought about his downfall.

"Die!"

Fang Yuan did not hesitate and shouted.

"Die!!!"

His voice was so loud like thunder and it almost deafened Gui Wusheng's ears.

"Aahh.....my Paralysing Scream!"

Gui Wusheng was shocked and couldn't avoid what was going to happen.

"Eagle Claw Palm!"

At that moment, Fang Yuan immediately caught up with him and took a shot. Fang Yuan broke all his limbs!

"Snap!"

Gui Wusheng fell to the ground softly and was in shock.

"Haha.....I've finally won!"

With his wisdom in martial arts, he actually managed to defeat an expert in Death Gate. Fang Yuan was very impressed with himself and was at a loss for words. He couldn't wait to cry into the air and rejoice.

"How is this possible....how could you have known my secret technique?"

When he was conscious again, this was the first sentence he said.

"Your secret technique.....involves the display of your magical energy isn't it? It wasn't that difficult, was it?"

Fang Yuan went forward and punched his lower abdomen. Fang Yuan then gave him a few slaps, causing Gui Wusheng to be injured badly in the face. The force of these blows knocked out some of his teeth into a bloody mess.

There was no other way. In his dream world, things like 'tearing tendons', 'committing suicide', 'poison in one's mouth' and many more left deep impressions on Fang Yuan.

Now, Gui Wusheng's limbs were broken, his martial arts abilities stripped off and his teeth knocked out. If he could still commit suicide in this short period of time, Fang Yuan would really be impressed by him.

"Oh....I.....understand now. You.....are naturally born with stronger magical energy...."

Gui Wusheng couldn't speak properly but he managed to express what he meant clearly. "This is heaven's will! Heaven's will!"

"Whatever you say!"

Fang Yuan then impolitely searched Gui Wusheng's body for something of value to keep.

There were many bottles and cans on his body and most of them contained things like poisonous powder, medicine, flammable items and coins.

Fang Yuan smelled a few medicine bottles and threw them away.

Gui Wusheng didn't even poison him. Plus, Fang Yuan was highly skilled in medicine and had Yama's Order with him to remove any kind of poison. Hence, the poison made by Gui Wusheng was nothing

in his eyes.

However, Fang Yuan's eyes glittered when he opened a wooden box.

Inside the box was a piece of jade. The piece of jade was clear and shiny. There were faint black and red textures inside it and the textures seemed to be moving, making it special.

"Is this the Yin Yang Jade?!"

Fang Yuan murmured and couldn't believe his eyes. How could he be able to get hold of such treasure in a farce?

Clearly, he wasn't prepared to receive anything good, was it? This was simply like a gift straight from heaven and coincidentally, it landed on him.

"Something is not right. What is actually going on?"

Fang Yuan, of course, couldn't believe that he would be so lucky. He immediately grabbed Gui Wusheng by his collar and questioned him.

"Haha.....you really think I will tell you?"

Life was slowly fading from Gui Wusheng's eyes.

Fang Yuan kept silent for a while and slowly said, "You may not know yet that I am Fang Yuan and I live in the secluded valley!"

Gui Wusheng's expression changed upon hearing what Fang Yuan said.

No matter how ignorant he was, he heard about the famous doctor in Qingye City.

"As a doctor myself, I have many ways to make people speak. I do not wish to test these methods one by one on you....Plus, you do have relatives, friends and disciples don't you?"

Fang Yuan said in a deep voice.

"You....are a member of the martial arts world and how could you go against the principle of not hurting one's family....."

Gui Wusheng struggled and said.

"Who told you that I was a member of the martial arts world?"

Fang Yuan glanced at him and gave a jocose look.

Gui Wusheng remained silent and Fang Yuan saw through him. Gui Wusheng was pretending to be sanctimonious but he was actually indifferent from any other people. He could do anything if he forced himself to do so.

After a long period of silence, he finally admitted defeat. "This Yin Yang Jade was actually a treasure of the Five Ghosts Sect...."

Chapter 61: Emerge

"This Yin Yang Jade came from the Five Ghosts Sect?"

Fang Yuan was shocked. "Is the news about the treasure fake too? Just to create chaos?"

"That's right!"

Gui Wusheng nodded and appeared lost.

"To create confusion, you guys can even use the Yin Yang Jade as bait..."

Fang Yuan took in a deep breath.

To hide from the many martial artists, sacrifice would be required, and this was the sole purpose of the Yin Yang Jade.

With a [Martial Artist (8th Gate)] and a well thought-out plan, the Yin Yang Jade was safe. Unfortunately, they encountered Fang Yuan.....

"Good! However, the focus is not on the Yin Yang Jade..."

Fang Yuan threw the jade up in the air and became serious. "That what is your real motive?"

"Our real motive..."

Gui Wusheng became expressionless but slowly began to describe. "It is a treasure map! Or should I say, an incomplete scrap... Our Sect once received a copy, but it was lost. This is the second copy!"

...

Luori City.

This city was at the extreme North of Lieyang County, and even further North of Shaoyang City. There was a ridge of mountains outside the city, called Xuanyan. Legend has it that there was fire everywhere and was extremely dangerous.

It was noon, and farmers were ploughing on their farms, businessman working in their shops. Often kids could be seen playing by the river, and it was a lively sight to behold.

"Hu..."

Just before the gates to the city were closed, a person in a cloak hurriedly rushed to enter Luori City.

"This place... Is indeed different from Shaoyang City!"

This cloaked person was Fang Yuan.

After Gui Wusheng's tip-off, he hurriedly killed him and rushed to Luori City.

Compared to Shaoyang City, which was filled with martial artists, Luori City was more lively. The villagers were carefree, and no one would have thought that under this peace was a big mystery.

'Even if I said it out, no one would believe that most of the Sect masters of Five Ghosts Sect actually live here...'

Even though it was quieter than Shaoyang City, Fang Yuan could feel an immense pressure as he entered Luori City.

This wasn't a real feeling, but more of his imagination. It made him realise that this place was ten times more dangerous than Shaoyang City! A hundred times!

"I still cannot fight and win any Martial artist of 4 Heavenly Gates..."

Fang Yuan knew his own capabilities. He could easily defeat any [Martial Artist (7th Gate)], or be on par with a [Martial Artist (8th Gate)].

If he made use of his external martial arts techniques, he might get a chance at winning. However, against the martial artists of 4 Heavenly Gates who trained and fused their Yin and Yang, he would stand no chance.

Furthermore, the Sect Leader of Five Ghosts Sect was similar to Shi Yutong and had already attained Wu Zong!

"At the moment, I can only hope for an internal conflict for myself to reap the benefits afterwards... Hopefully, the news that I let out would be useful!"

In such a dangerous position, he could only keep reminding himself not to be too stubborn.

If he succeeded, that would be best, but if he did not, it was still alright, as staying alive was the most important.

Even if he did not get anything, in the end, he still would have the Yin Yang Jade as a consolation prize.

"I am about to break through the Death Gate, and by then the Yin Yang Jade would be useful in aiding me in my journey to become a martial artist of 4 Heavenly Gates!"

Fang Yuan thought for a while, walked along the streets and entered a hostel.

"It seems that Spirit Returning Sect is not foolish. Elder Han was lured to Shaoyang City, Shi Yutong couldn't locate him... If they received my anonymous letter they would surely come and fight over it... I shall be the coward to watch the fight by the side!"

After deciding, he booked a small room. Every day, it seemed that he was quietly practising his martial arts, but in actual fact, he was observing the movement within Luori City.

After all, he had already decided not to appear. If there was no response from the Spirit Returning Sect, or if the news came late, then he could only accept it.

...

"The Five Ghosts Sect Sect Master being sceptical, did not really describe the real treasure map to Gui Wusheng. He only instructed him to spread the fake news. Only a few martial artists of 4

Heavenly Gates know the truth..."

Fang Yuan was practising his martial arts peacefully in the small room. White smoke rose from his head like fog, and it appeared like clouds were forming.

"[Eagle Claw Iron Skin Technique (Grade 7)] progress is filled, and now I just need to find an opportunity to break through the Death Gate..."

Breaking through the 8th Gate was extremely decisive. If breaking through failed, he would die, and there would be no second chance!

Although he was confident in his own foundation, Fang Yuan wanted to condition his body to the best it could be while breaking through.

"Rumble!"

His ears stood up as he heard the loud rumble.

"Hmm? They've started fighting already?"

Fang Yuan leapt over the wall and saw a bright crimson flash from within the city. Shoutings were heard and shadows flying around. He was happy to witness this scene.

With his abilities, it was impossible to stalk the Five Ghosts Sect and ambush them, but it would be a totally different story if the Spirit Returning Sect were to do it.

Without consideration, Fang Yuan jumped down and made his way towards the crimson flash.

"Ping! Ping!"

The nearer he approached, the louder the rumbling became, as though thunder roared ten times simultaneously.

A chaos of this scale would surely attract the attention of the soldiers and martial artists. However, no one dared to take another step towards them, and the whole mess was a good opportunity for

Fang Yuan.

As he came closer, he realised that it wasn't a fight within the Five Ghosts Sect's compound, but in a rich businessman's manor.

At this moment, numerous shadows flew across the roof, and every action they took was full of strength.

"From the Spirit Returning Sect? All the way here?"

In the scene was a duo in black, surrounding an old lady clad in silver clothing.

Although these 3 people appeared lifeless, their moves were deadly and they appeared powerful. Even Fang Yuan himself was afraid to join the fight.

"Martial artists of the 4 Heavenly Gates!"

Fang Yuan hid to the side and stared at the old lady, shocked.

Even though all of them were martial artists of 4 Heavenly Gates, the old lady could sweep her crutch and pressure the other two. She was extremely strong.

"Cha!"

Out of a sudden, the old lady shrieked, and the lion head on her crutch pounced forward, breaking through the defence of one of the elders, as it touched his chest.

"Senior?"

The two elders retreated quickly, and the one which was touched by the old lady began to spit out blood.

"Good! Good! Good!"

The younger brother clenched his teeth, his eyes seeking revenge. "Elder Yan... Lady Yan! Today's score will be settled, and we the Ghost Brothers will remember it for life!"

Together with his brother, one was Yin and one was Yang, but against this Lady Yan, they realised that she already broke through

11 Gates, and have already fused her Yin and Yang to become an elemental energy martial artist!

At this stage, the only thing she needed to do was to train and get ready to break through Heaven Gate!

[Martial Artist (11th Gate)] are not to be belittled as they harnessed elemental force. It was therefore not so surprising to see her fend off two opponents by herself.

"Keke..."

Lady Yan kept her crutch, coughed a few times, hunched her back and lost all her craziness previously during the fight. "Cough... As I get older, my memory would fail me... Two of you, did you see me leave anything behind? Do a good deed and pass it to me, and I will offer tea, apologise and leave immediately, how does that sound?"

"What thing? We didn't see anything!"

The Ghost Brothers appeared shocked and denied.

"Heh... I have not told you what is it, so why are you so quick to turn me down?"

Lady Yan shook her head, rolled her eyes and looked at the two of them. "What a pity, Yin Shizhong, Brother Yin is not here. He should have lured Elder Han away by now, right? Two of you cannot hold me back!

The Ghost Brothers looked aghast, but could not deny that she was stating the truth.

At this moment, Fang Yuan was hiding in the shadows. His hair stood on its ends as he became increasingly anxious. He took a deep breath and concealed himself even more.

"They cannot block you, but how about me?"

Behind Lady Yan was a fearless and cold-blooded voice. It was as though every word of his could freeze one's blood.

While the voice was heard, Lady Yan immediately swung her crutch backwards with immense strength.

"Hong!"

The lion on the crutch opened its jaws and spewed crimson fire, accompanied with black smoke.

After striking, Lady Yan struck forward again, caught her footing and turned around.

Where she once stood was empty, and only the remnants of the raging fire were left behind, which stunned her.

"Very impressive, I've heard about stories of Lady Yan's 'Flaming Lion Crutch'. It was designed by Carpenter Lu, sturdy and able to spew poisonous fire from the top of the crutch. It is ranked 87th in the secluded mountains unique weapon ranking, and I've finally seen it for myself today..."

The voice came from behind Lady Yan. Although it sounded normal, it was a praise.

"Five... Ghosts... Sect... Master!"

Lady Yan turned pale and stuttered while saying out the name she feared most.

Only someone who had broken through the Heaven Gate attained Wu Zong and able to harness elemental force would be able to toy around with her!

"This is... Wu Zong?"

Fang Yuan shuddered and did not dare to look at the Five Ghosts Sect Sect Master.

After all, based on rumours, the Wu Zong martial artist is extremely sensitive and would be able to sense when someone is looking at him. He then would feel the urge to kill those within 35 yards.

"Keke! Why would Sect Master find trouble with Lady Yan? If

you have any vengeance, just deal with me!"

At this moment, accompanying bell ringing, Shi Yutong appeared and seemed welcoming. "I had a few suspicions when I heard about the news, but after seeing Sect Master here, I have no more doubts!"

Chapter 62: A Mysterious Man

"Shi Yutong?"

Upon seeing a Wu Zong, like himself, appear, the sect head of the Five Ghosts Sect lost his interest in teasing and making fun of Lady Yan and stood still.

"Sect Head!"

Lady Yan immediately rushed to Shi Yutong.

Now that this respected woman was around, Lady Yan dared to look at the sect head of the Five Ghosts Sect.

The sect head of the Five Ghosts Sect had a small stature, almost like a dwarf. He wore an ice mask and rays of green light shone from his triangular eyes. This sight was sufficient to strike fear into anyone who looked at him.

"Someone leaked the news!"

At this moment, the sect head of the Five Ghosts Sect spoke in an icy tone.

If it was just Lady Yan who came, it would be easy to turn her away. Anyway, it could have been because they found some inconclusive traces of a horse.

However, now that Shi Yutong appeared personally, they must be very confident! Their determination seemed unflinching.

The loss of control in this situation unsettled the head of the Five Ghosts Sect.

The disciples of the Five Ghosts Sect glanced at each other and gathered behind their sect head. Both camps glared at each other as tensions soared. Anything could spark a war between the two groups.

Fang Yuan who heard the conversation from his hiding spot felt something was amiss.

According to his plan, the Spirit Returning Sect should have checked out and tested the situation and confirmed that everything was alright before attacking. This confrontation should not even be happening.

After all, the Five Ghosts Sect and the Spirit Returning Sect were equally powerful. Should they fight each other, both would suffer greatly.

Shi Yutong and the sect head of the Five Ghosts Sect were both smart people and they should have recognised this fact.

If this was so, what gave Shi Yutong the confidence to barge in like that?

Fang Yuan was unsure about this, but it did not seem to stop him from retreating.

At the same time, upon sensing the emerging tension and the incendiary desire for battle, the sect head of the Five Ghosts Sect smirked provokingly.

"Shi Yutong!"

The sect head of the Five Ghosts Sect spoke haltingly, "You seem intent on opposing everything I do. Is this your declaration of war against the Five Ghosts Sect?"

"Hehe...How would I dare? I am just here to ask you to return our item, that's all!"

Shi Yutong replied playfully in a tone which gave the impression that she was vivacious and quick-witted, which was typical of girls her age. The only problem was people who treated her like this sort of girl would definitely suffer a grotesque death.

"Snap!"

A flash of white light that seemed like lightning shot out of nowhere.

"It has begun...What exactly is the level of elemental force of a

Wu Zong?"

In his retreat, Fang Yuan tried to get a glimpse of what was going on out of curiosity.

This scene was different from what he saw earlier between the martial artists at the Four Heavenly Gates. In this duel between the martial artists during elemental force, apart from the flash of light at the beginning, all was quiet.

"Is this...because both martial artists have perfected the art of using elemental force such that it does not manifest in other forms of energy, which explains why the effects are not visible to us?"

The powers of Shi Yutong and the sect head of the Five Ghosts Sect were so powerful they seemed godly. This scared Fang Yuan.

The strongest evidence of their powers was the sight of the martial artists who tried to creep forward to sabotage either of the duellists losing their power instantly, as though they were swallowed by a giant whirlpool.

"They moved!"

Of course, Fang Yuan was unable to catch sight of the two martial artists.

However, when he saw the disciples of the Five Ghosts Sect and Lady Yan use their Lightness Skill and sped for the city gates, he could not resist following them secretly.

"Eh? Is something wrong?"

At this moment, from all corners of Luori City, several silhouettes emerged and rushed off, using Lightness Skill, into the distance one after another. This startled Fang Yuan.

Despite knowing the two dueling were extremely powerful, as well as that the earlier unlucky few perished because they were too close to the duel, these people who still dared to follow them were definitely formidable martial artists themselves.

...

"Phew phew!"

Traveling at a blistering speed, they arrived at Xuanyan Mountain in no time.

This place was very different from Clear Spirit Mountain. Most of the knolls were bare, revealing the red boulders and soil of the mountain.

Even from the depressions of the mountain, one could feel the blistering heat emitted from there. It was obvious that inside the depression, there was a terrifying volcanic lava from the crater.

As for the natives living in the mountain and the martial artists, this Xuanyan Mountain was a place to avoid! If one were to fall into the crater, it did not matter how powerful the person was, one would completely dissolve into the lava.

"How dare you despicable and inferior people try to finish us off while we are fighting each other? You must have a death wish!!!"

All of a sudden, the Five Ghost Sect disciples and Lady Yan who were sprinting ahead halted, turned on their heels in mid-air and sped behind, all in sync with each other. One would not be able to tell that they were at each other's throats before this.

"As expected, the idea of watching the Spirit Returning Sect and Five Ghosts Sect destroy each other and picking up the scraps after that is not that realistic after all. They are already starting to clear the area..."

Fang Yuan silently tore off a piece of cloth from his robe and covered half his face.

At this moment, despite the intimidation by Lady Yan and the Five Ghost Sect disciples, there were still people chasing after the dueling pair. Those who still dared to do so were inner power experts who were at least at the 5th Gate and above.

Furthermore, the number of these people far surpassed what Fang Yuan expected.

"It seems like I am not the only intelligent person around!"

Upon seeing this, Fang Yuan immediately realised that of all these experts, a majority of them were not locals. Most of them moved in only recently, having the same intentions as him to strike when both sects were weak! What he did not know was how they got their information.

"Everyone attack together!"

A hideous voice rang out as a powerful force exploded, revealing a proud figure. This startled Lady Yan and the disciples of the Five Ghosts Sect and they exclaimed, "Dugu Hong?"

This man was a well-known martial artist who always trained on his own. He did not belong to any particular sect and roamed about freely. The reasons behind his sudden appearance were unclear.

"Since Brother Dugu made the request, we would definitely go along with you!"

Dugu Hong's order was answered by three martial artists at the same time as they leapt out. They were dressed like hunters, draping their backs with wolf-skin, and the wolf heads on their shoulders bore eyes that glistened.

"The Three Wild Wolf Brothers?"

The disciples of the Five Ghosts Sect became more troubled.

Although the three brothers were not on the same level as Dugu Hong, they were also formidable opponents who were experts at Yin energy. When the three of them combined their efforts, they could be equivalent to a martial artist at the peak of the 12th Gate.

"Haha...Lady Yan and disciples of the Five Ghost Sect, get out of the way if you do not wish to die!"

All these lone martial artists armed with extremely high levels of

martial prowess who outnumbered Lady Yan and the disciples of the Five Ghost Sect charged forward.

"Kill!"

Lady Yan and the disciples of the Five Ghost Sect looked at each other, roared and stood their ground as they attempted to fight off the attackers.

"Bang bang!"

With the forces and energies from the various martial artists clashing with each other, a messy and ferocious war erupted instantly!

"All these martial artists are not familiar with each other and thus do not trust each other yet. As they fight they are constantly watching their own backs..."

Fang Yuan had no intention of joining in the fight and tried to swiftly skirt around the melee.

With Lady Yan and the disciples of the Five Ghost Sect fighting for their lives, and the martial artists on the other side refraining from over-exerting, the fight would definitely last a long time.

Of course, this would be exactly what Lady Yan and the disciples of the Five Ghost Sect wanted to achieve.

Instead of joining in the fight, why not take advantage of this chance to skirt around them and move to the front.

"Die!"

Just when Fang Yuan thought of this idea, he found out he was not the only who had the same thoughts.

Furthermore, the other person was his competitor in this situation.

Just as he moved around the fight and was preparing to move forward, a martial artist dressed in black crept up next to him and threw out successive punches with both fists.

Fang Yuan felt the force from the punches and then deduced that his competitor was also an expert at the 6th Gate at least.

Judging from the power of his opponent, his fists were no less lethal than a weapon. This caused Fang Yuan to remember a famous fighting technique.

"Wind and Thunder Palm? D*mn, rumour has it that this technique is immensely powerful. When it is executed by a martial artist at the 6th Gate, even a martial artist at the 7th Gate would be unable to meet this technique head on..."

As Fang Yuan thought to himself, he made use of the pitch darkness and sent his fist flying menacingly towards his opponent like a pestle.

"Snap!"

The force from Fang Yuan's fist contacted with that of his opponent's palm. At that moment, a hint of triumph crept into his opponent's eyes. But it changed also almost instantly into excruciating pain as the bones in his arm shattered. He was sent somersaulting backwards into the air, spilling blood as he went.

In just one move, this was even more powerful than a martial artist at the 7th Gate!

To describe the event in words did not do the sheer speed of it justice. In reality, everything seemed to happen in the blink of an eye.

After defeating his enemy in just one move, Fang Yuan did not turn back and skirted the main fighting area and headed deeper into the mountain.

Upon seeing this, Gudu Hong, the Wild Wolf Brothers and the rest were even more frustrated. Furthermore, Lady Yan and the Five Ghost Sect disciples were determined and desperate to prevent the other martial artists from chasing their dueling sect heads.

"To break through and arrive here...It must have been easy?"

As Fang Yuan sped along the mountain road, he visually surveyed his surroundings and realised the martial artists who were similarly able to break through or skirt past the fighting were like him. They were mostly between the 6th and 7th Gate and were not as recognised.

"Yeah... Lady Yan and the disciples of the Five Ghosts Sect found us too insignificant to hold us back. We are not as powerful and troublesome as Gudu Hong and the Wild Wolf Brothers. I never thought I would enjoy this 'privilege' of having inferior martial prowess..."

After turning around a peak, the company saw a huge volcanic crater.

Next to the crater, two people were exchanging blows at a speed so fast it looked blur to the naked eye. It was Shi Yutong duelling the head of the Five Ghosts Sect!

Seeing this, Fang Yuan felt confused and suspicious.

The precious treasure map had yet to appear, so why would these two respected and powerful martial artists expend all their energy fighting each other? Were they not afraid that the map might not even exist and thus create a lifelong enemy for themselves?

Or was it possible that both were extremely confident that they would completely defeat the other?

With this thought, Fang Yuan immediately stopped advancing. His goose bumps erected as he thought, "Oh no! There might be a trap!"

He immediately turned around and left without hesitation.

How could a broken piece from a treasure map be more valuable than my own life?

The risks at that point in time were far higher than what he had

predicted and had already exceeded the profits he could hope to receive.

"Eh?"

Upon seeing how Fang Yuan decided to not pursue further, a few of his companions became suspicious too.

"I did not think that...there would be another enlightened person? What a pity..."

With a low noise coming from what looked like a common 5th Gate martial artist, the situation changed completely at that instant.

A layer of blood surfaced on his body. The martial artists around him were astonished. At that split second, his body disintegrated, and blood flowed out rapidly. The blood cluttered at his side and formed what seemed to look like several pythons writhing about.

"Blood Pythons...Attack!"

He pointed a few lucky survivors. The Blood Pythons immediately locked on their targets and charged. Fang Yuan was one of the targets.

"What an impressive technique! It's a spiritual knight!"

Seeing this startling and terrifying sight, one of the martial artists screamed aloud.

Chapter 63: Reveal

"This is...."

Fang Yuan retreated but the Bloody Python was coming straight at him and an explosion was heard

"Bang!"

In this very short period of time, he could only execute the inner strength of the Iron Skin Technique to defend himself. A bright red light flashed across him.

"Piak!"

Fang Yuan's expression changed and could only feel intense pain on both of his hands. A powerful and corrosive energy broke through his defence and was spreading across his arms.

He was suffering till now as his inner strength of the [Eagle Claw Technique (Grade 7)] was deflected easily by that energy. This situation was similar to when a martial artist who was trained in inner power duelled with an expert in inner force.

"Puff!"

He rolled and landed on the ground. He was in shock and said, "Is this....the elemental force? So the rumour of a well trained spiritual knight having the ability to leverage the power of nature is true!!"

"Eh?"

The explosion of the blood-coloured python caused the bodies of the martial artists who were defeated to disappear.

Fang Yuan survived as he managed to escape far away from the explosion. Plus, he was only badly injured, which meant he still had a chance of survival.

The mysterious man in black was surprised after seeing this. "You are lucky. Others who have tasted my bloody elemental force

in normal circumstances would not have to think about surviving."

Looking at Fang Yuan who was unconscious, he moved 2 steps forward and a bloody bright light appeared on his right hand. It seemed that he wanted to end Fang Yuan's life.

"Ouch!!!"

At that moment, a shout was heard from the magma lake and it sounded urgent.

"Damn it! Can't even hold it longer, what a useless guy!"

The man in black changed his expression and abandoned Fang Yuan and galloped away.

"My Bloody Python will strike in all directions!"

The Bloody Python was executed along with a roar and it became more powerful and concentrated. It also gave out a noxious rotting smell.

"Spiritual knight?No! Another spiritual disciple that has not been promoted? So he is your backup?"

Shi Yutong said in a clear and loud voice which could be heard from far away.

'Shi Yutong was so capable that she could make the head of the Five Ghosts Sect use his backup move on her.....but his backup move is indeed incredible....."

There was a breeze and Fang Yuan who was 'badly injured' got up and frowned. He focused his inner forcefully on healing his injuries.

Previously, he was pretending to be unconscious actually. If the mysterious spiritual knight had decided to kill him, he would have fought for his life.

Luckily for him, Shi Yutong's skill was way superior and could manage to suppress the head of the Five Ghosts Sect and distract him, allowing Fang Yuan to escape and survive.

"But what about these injuries due to the elemental force....."

Fang Yuan was expressionless. He looked at his arm and frowned.

When he was attacked by the Bloody Python, his clothing on both of his arms was broken into pieces and this caused his exposed arm to be burnt. The wounds on his arm were so bad that he could see the bones of his arm.

Even his inner force couldn't help to heal his injuries fast enough and suppress it from spreading.

"This bloody elemental force acts like a poison? It is indeed powerful!"

He could feel intense pain and numbness from his injuries. Fang Yuan knew that if he still didn't receive any medical attention yet, his injuries would worsen and spread. By then, he would have to amputate both of his arms and his life would also be in danger!

"Since it is poison and the injuries are due to elemental force, normal pills shouldn't work....."

He frowned and took out two bamboo fruits with much difficulty. He swallowed them and thought about the Yama's Order he had with him. He then drank the whole bottle of Yama's Order as well.

"Hoo hoo!"

The bamboo fruit was indeed a powerful spiritual object. Once the fruit entered his stomach, Fang Yuan could feel a clear stream gurgling through his arms and his arms felt less painful.

"Luckily.....I have the bamboo fruit with me still. If not, with these injuries, I would really be in big trouble!"

Fang Yuan bandaged his wounds and lurked towards the magma lake to see what was going on.

"Whooo!"

The tremendous force from the one of the duelist's palm

technique caused sound effects which sounded like the howling of the wind.

He could see the duel between Shi Yutong and head of the Five Ghosts Sect. Their moves were very fast and fluid. There were no explosions although there were loud noises created during the duel.

That mysterious disciple beside the both of them was circling 9 Bloody Pythons and murmuring incantations. This caused the Bloody Pythons to flank Shi Yutong constantly.

Shi Yutong was actually fearful of such spiritual attacks and it gave the head of the Five Ghosts Sect a chance for a breather when he was almost going to be defeated. Now, he had a chance to gain the upper hand.

As time passed, the three of them were fully focused on the fight and completely unaware of their surroundings.

"Haha....that is unfortunate!"

Fang Yuan felt regretful when he saw what happened.

Victory was about to land in on one of the party's hand. If he was an expert in 4 Heavenly Gates, he would be able to change the verdict of the duel.

However, he was just a [Martial Artist (7th Gate)] and he was injured. If he was to join in the battle now, he would definitely not survived through it.

"Patience! Patience!"

He advised himself silently and hid somewhere even deeper.

After all, he wasn't here to obtain something of value and since now he knew how powerful the spiritual knight was, it was not a good time for him to attack.

"Both Wu Zong and the spiritual knight are trained in elemental force. However, both would produce different effects....."

This battle was actually a good chance for him to learn and improve further.

"The spiritual knight is more focused on the conversion of his elemental force into spells.....On the other hand, Wu Zong also has elemental energy but one will use it to condition his or her body. Therefore, both have different uses!"

"However, according to what Shi Yutong said, the man in black has not been promoted to become a spiritual knight, but he is powerful enough to duel with Wu Zong....."

"However, Shi Yutong is highly skilled and was scheming. How could she land herself in such a disadvantageous situation?"

.....

Fang Yuan pondered over his thoughts and focused on hiding himself.

"I cannot give her any more chances as she is waiting for me to be lured out of the city and there will definitely be traps.....Blood Killer!!!"

The head of the Five Ghosts Sect shouted and his eyes were filled with anger. He seemed to have a secret technique and his energy surged. "Five Ghosts Soul Capturing Technique!"

He stretched his fingers and visible black smokes could be seen. It then became like a ferocious looking ghost which pounced forward.

"Wu! Wu!"

"Jie jie!"

"Hehe!"

.....

At that moment, there were many ghostly screams heard and 5 streaks of black smokes transformed into a giant ghostly claw. The claw fiercely clamped down like the Five Fingers Mountain.

"He released his elemental force to form that?"

Shi Yutong let out a surprised scream and she transformed into 9 silhouettes suddenly which darted off in all directions.

"Come down now!"

The head of the Five Ghosts Sect gave a ferocious look and pulled back both of his hands.

His Ghostly Claw tore through the silhouettes and left Shi Yutong in her original spot.

Shi Yutong's moves were impressive but the Ghostly Claw was much more superior!

"What are you waiting for?!"

After such a move, the sect head of the Five Ghosts Sect was already panting. He could not move to sustain his Ghostly Claw and could only shout in despair.

"Haha! Well done!"

Presented with this golden opportunity, the Blood Killer would not let it slip.

He used his Ghostly Claw to suppress Shi Yutong and the 9 Bloody Pythons were attacking her at the same time. "9 Bloody Pythons, you shall explode!!!!!!!!!!!"

"Hiss!"

As compared to how the Bloody Pythons attacked Fang Yuan previously, the Bloody Pythons revealed their tongues this time and made hissing sounds. Their scales were revealed clearly and they were indeed powerful.

Seeing that the Bloody Pythons were charging towards Shi Yutong, the head of the Five Ghosts Sect was elated.

"Whiz whiz!"

At that moment, there was a sudden change!

A few emerald flashes struck the pythons' heads.

"Puff! Puff!"

The heads of the pythons exploded one by one like explosives and blood splashed everywhere.

Suddenly, there was a sound of a flute coming from far and the notes from it were incredibly lively. Fang Yuan could feel the notes invigorating him as if he was in a different setting, filled with blooming flowers in spring.

"Sorry that I came late, please forgive me!"

From the sound of the flute, the head of the Five Ghosts Sect retreated and spat out a mouthful of blood. His Five Ghosts Soul Capturing Technique was then lifted.

A clear and spiritual female voice was heard along with the sound of the flute.

After the sound, a beam of emerald green light struck right beside the Blood Killer.

"Aahh...elemental blood defence!"

He shouted and a pool of blood appeared on his body. However, he couldn't avoid what was about to happen as the beam of the emerald green light struck through his body, leaving a bloody hole.

"A flute? A woman?!"

The Blood Killer covered his chest and seemed to have recalled something scary. He immediately escaped without hesitation!

Before he left, he gave a ferocious look and patted the head of the Five Ghosts Sect's back. He then placed a violet pill on the head of the Five Ghosts Sect's Yuzhen acupuncture point.

"Blood Killer....you?"

Seeing that his ally betrayed him, the head of the Five Ghosts Sect was in shock and wasn't ready to defend himself.

The pill that was placed by the Blood Killer was especially mysterious. The pill went through his skin and he could feel its effect instantly.

"Hoo! Hoo!"

The head of the Five Ghosts Sect kept panting and his face was blushing. Many of his veins started hideously to pop out like worms beneath his skin.

Suddenly, he shouted and pounced right at Shi Yutong like a crazy man.

The Blood Killer then managed to escape with this opportunity.

....

"Crazy Blood Pill?"

At that moment, a lady arrived at the scene. She was dressed in a green gown, wore a golden bangle on her head and had an emerald-coloured belt at her waist. She was beautiful.

Seeing that the head of the Five Ghosts Sect had become crazy, she joined in the battle. Both the lady and Shi Yutong managed to suppress him.

"Fortunately, you came just in time to help me. Otherwise, I would be in big trouble.....Why did you let the Blood Killer off?"

Shi Yutong asked.

The lady in green then answered with a laugh. "You overestimate me. Even though Blood Killer had not been promoted to become the spiritual knight, but right after he had seen my secret technique, he thought I was way more superior and thus he fled...."

Chapter 64: Resistance

"Seeing how things are, it seems that both Shi Yutong and the Five Ghosts Sect have their own ideas on how to defeat each other, and both had managed to get assistance..."

At the sound of the flute, the Blood Killer escaped and Fang Yuan managed to retreat as well.

"The only difference is that Shi Yutong's reinforcement came from outside the city, and only arrived after Lady Yan was discovered, and therefore Shi Yutong was forced to reveal herself to lure the head of Five Ghosts Sect out of the city...."

"Shi Yutong's skill was above that of the head of the Five Ghosts Sect, and her assistant could scare away the Blood Killer. She was totally in control of the situation, and they had no chance of retaliating!"

"Lieyang County will be very different from this day onwards..."

Fang Yuan witnessed how the Blood Killer betrayed head of the Five Ghosts Sect and used him as a bait for him to escape, and knew that the head of the Five Ghosts Sect was unlikely to walk out alive under the attack of Shi Yutong and her strong assistant.

The Five Ghost Sect would crumble without their head, and other sects would take advantage of them once they were at their downfall.

...

"Whoosh!"

Fang Yuan flew into the woods, his eyes filled with fury.

"The Blood Killer is only strong in his spiritual spells. As for his martial arts cultivation, he is only equivalent to that of a [Martial Artist (5th Gate)]... Furthermore, he was hurt by the emerald flashes..."

"And as for me? I've recovered from eating the bamboo fruit, and although my external wounds look terrifying, my internal wounds have already recovered quite a bit, and I can even fight!"

Fang Yuan was unwilling to risk his life for a treasure map he knew little about.

But it's different about the Blood Killer!

This person was a spiritual knight! ... Alright, according to Shi Yutong he was a spiritual knight-to-be, and badly hurt too. This was attractive to Fang Yuan, who wanted to observe spiritual spells in action.

With the intention to stalk the Blood Killer, the Blood Killer could not run away from Fang Yuan.

Indeed, after an hour, the Blood Killer stopped near a mountain spring to take a rest.

The bandage over his wound on his chest was red. He twitched and felt suspicious. "The spiritual weapon does not seem to be the widely-known Spiritual Emerald Silk! If the Spiritual Emerald Silk attacked me personally, I would never have the chance to escape... Could it be that someone is tricking me?"

After thinking, he felt extremely regretful.

He knew that with him and the head of the Five Ghosts Sect teaming up, they would just be able to take down Shi Yutong, but the moment her ally arrived, even if it was a young disciple, they would have won. This was the main reason why he escaped without a doubt.

The only thing was that betraying the head of the Five Ghosts Sect was akin to burning a bridge, and felt that it was a pity.

"Curse you! After I have officially become a spiritual knight, I will peel all your skins alive to vent out my anger and take my revenge..."

Blood Killer sighed, bent down and drank the spring water.

After quenching his thirst, he opened his robes, looked at the blood-red bandage, clenched his teeth and tore it apart.

"Piak!"

As the bandage fell apart, blood spurt out of the wound.

"Mm..."

He bit his teeth and was sweating profusely. His right arm was shivering as he retrieved a dark-green bottle from his pocket. He scattered some white powder onto his wound and began to bandage it.

Fang Yuan came out of hiding and took a few steps forward.

"Who's that?"

As the Blood Killer looked up, his eyes revealed an emerald flash, as though he was an injured wolf.

'I was discovered?'

Fang Yuan changed his mind, stood up and acted as though he was afraid. "Don't... Don't kill me..."

"Mmm?"

Blood Killer noticed his rotting arm and was perplexed. "You were that martial artist, but why are you still alive? How is this possible?"

He knew Fang Yuan was a [Martial Artist (6th/7th Gate)] and therefore was not on guard. Unknowingly, he took a few steps towards him as though he was a weak martial artist who was easily affected by his blood elemental force. He was suspicious as to how Fang Yuan survived his attack.

"This is the moment!"

Fang Yuan stood his ground and struck.

"Whoosh!"

He rushed forward and felt the air rush over his claws, as he made an eagle's cry. He appeared next to the Blood Killer as his claws emerged, with a black spot on his palm; the poison from the mutated Pearl Tail Snake harnessed in his palms.

"Hmm?"

Even though he was injured, he remained calm as he looked at Fang Yuan attacking him, as though he was extremely confident.

"Mind Calming Spell!"

He bit his tongue and spit out blood towards Fang Yuan, and shouted.

"Wung!"

A weird vibration was felt as it travelled onto Fang Yuan's body.

Fang Yuan was shocked, and at the moment he stood at where he was, maintaining his pouncing posture.

"Hehe... This Mind Calming Spell is indeed useful when dealing with normal people... Cough Cough..."

After two coughs, he examined Fang Yuan. "This person could survive my Bloody Python attack, it seems he is somewhat special. He would be a good ingredient for me to make a blood corpse... And while I am injured, I will need protection..."

"Dementor!"

He took two steps forward, and in his right hand was a dark-red pill. Mischief filled his eyes, as he exclaimed, "From today onwards, I am your master, and now, eat this!"

Blood Killer ordered and stretched his right hand out.

But at that moment, his expression changed.

Fang Yuan's expressionless face changed to one of mocking.

'This isn't possible, how can a normal human being who is not of Wu Zong level be able to escape my Mind Calming Spell... Could it

be...'

Wild thoughts ran through his mind, quick as lightning.

There were very close to each other and it would be useless if any one of them tried to defend himself.

This golden opportunity was one that Fang Yuan wouldn't give up.

"Die!!!"

He focused his inner force and his words were loud as thunder. It was something he picked up from Gui Wusheng, and the Blood Killer was stunned for the moment.

His right hand struck out like lightning and formed an eagle's claw. He hooked on to the throat of Blood Killer, pulled with his might and a distinct fracture sound could be heard.

"Eagle Claw Technique! Black Sand Palm!"

After the first move, Fang Yuan continuously struck at the Blood Killer like raindrops, every move aiming at the Blood Killer's vulnerable spot.

After all, he was a cunning person and Fang Yuan was afraid to let him survive.

Fang Yuan was fortunate to be lucky.

Blood Killer's corpse landed on the ground, like a doll being abused.

"Phew..."

Fang Yuan heaved a sigh of relieve after witnessing his death but was afraid of the trouble which might come along.

To deal with a spiritual disciple was indeed not an easy task.

Even when he was injured, he could conjure up spells. If not for Fang Yuan's remarkable magic abilities, he would have been trapped and made his slave.

On hindsight, it was rather scary.

"However... Even though the elemental energy of the spiritual disciple is similar to that of Wu Zong, it was extremely different... Just now, it felt as though he had used up all his energy and had little strength left."

With combat experience, Fang Yuan realised a little secret of the spiritual disciple. "After all, their defence is average. Take for instance this Blood Killer. Without the help of the sect head of the Five Ghosts Sect's, he was no match for Shi Yutong... Only after attaining the level of a spiritual knight will be able to match up to a Wu Zong, or even surpass them..."

After thinking, he took a few steps forward and felt satisfied.

It was a good feeling to kill someone and take their treasure.

A spiritual knight would be scheming and Fang Yuan had to take precautions. He picked up a tree branch, carefully peeled open Blood Killer's clothing and found a cloth bag.

A few bottles within the bag were damaged from the fight, and the medicine powder was mixed together. Spiritual pills would be rendered useless by now as they were destroyed. Fang Yuan did not dare to touch any medicine or poison from the bag.

Other than these, there were other miscellaneous objects and a few taels of silver, which made him feel like it was not worth it.

"This can't be... I took such a risk to kill this spiritual disciple, and this is all I get?"

Looking at the rotten corpse, Fang Yuan remained speechless and even felt like whipping the corpse.

The good thing was that he wasn't such an extremist, and after rummaging through his belongings one more time, he stood up and sighed. "Ah... It seems that there is really nothing, I guess luck is not on my side!"

He remained silent as he looked at Blood Killer's corpse.

"You attempted to kill me first, and therefore it is only normal that you are killed by me. Just because you are a magical person, I will... dig a grave for you, so that you will not be eaten by wild beasts!"

Using his inner strength, it was effortless for him to dig a large hole in a short amount of time.

"Rest in peace!"

Fang Yuan struck his palm out and shoved the corpse and his belongings into the hole, and was about to cover the grave up.

At this moment, a jade-coloured object was revealed from the corpse, which stopped Fang Yuan in his tracks.

"Wait a minute... What is this?"

He grabbed a tree branch and flicked his arm out of the grave. The jade piece was clearly visible just beside the bone.

"What the..."

Fang Yuan spent a long time to separate the jade from the bone and appeared shocked. "This person is crazy, why would he hide this in his own body..."

If he didn't strike that many palms and claws on the Blood Killer till he was disfigured, he would not have discovered this piece of jade.

"What does this count as? Retribution? Since he could have hidden this piece of jadeite in his body, who is to say that there is no second piece, third piece... Even after his death, he is still asking to be tortured?"

He became speechless and vexed.

After a short while, he looked at the 2 looted objects that were washed and went into deep thought.

Because of the discovery of the jade, he had to force himself to do a thorough search on the corpse. His unintended move unknowingly brought him rewards.

Fang Yuan remained speechless as he looked at the loot.

"Treasure map... broken pieces..."

This treasure map was discovered in the Blood Killer's clothing, sewed in between the cloth. As for the corpse? After an intense search, Fang Yuan found nothing and proceed to bury him.

What appeared in front of Fang Yuan was an incomplete treasure map, similar to the one Han Shou had!

"This piece is the missing part of the treasure map, just lacking a corner! Who would've known that the Five Ghosts Sect had already obtained the treasure map and passed to the Blood Killer for safekeeping..."

This incredible encounter and miraculous turn of events left Fang Yuan speechless.

Chapter 65: The Death Gate

"Things are constantly changing in this world. Who can predict what is the next move?"

Fang Yuan had caused the Five Ghosts Sect Sect Master and the Blood Killer to be dead one after another. He managed to obtain pieces of the treasure map and was very happy with it.

With such treasure in his hand, he was naturally happy about it. However, he had only gotten two pieces and one last piece of the map was still missing. He was worried.

"No matter what, a treasure map that could cause the Five Ghosts Sect and a spiritual disciple to be so obsessed with would lead to a treasure that is extraordinary....."

"Of course, the most important issue is not this....."

Fang Yuan murmured and kept the pieces of the treasure map safely. His right hand touched a piece of jadeite and he kept silent.

That piece of jadeite was clear and shiny. It seemed that there were streaks of gold lines circulating in it, making it special.

Also, the Blood Killer had the treasure map sewn on his clothes but he hid the jadeite in his body, which clearly showed that the piece of jadeite was very precious.

"Just that.....I wonder what mystery this piece of jadeite holds!"

He stared at the square-shaped jadeite for a long time. He couldn't find any handwritings or symbols on it. It could reflect light when placed in water under sunlight.

"This is strange!"

Fang Yuan shook his head and kept the jadeite safely. He then continued on his journey.

During this trip outside the Qingye City, he battled in the jungle and killed Gui Wusheng and the Blood Killer. He also obtained a

few treasures like the Ying Yang Jade, pieces of the treasure map and the mysterious jadeite. He even got to observe a battle between Wu Zong and the spiritual disciple. Thus, he gained quite a lot through this trip and was very satisfied.

The only thing that he wanted to do now was to cut off any relations between him and these incidents.

This was fairly simple.

After all, Fang Yuan didn't even reveal his face before.

Even though back in Shaoyang City, someone witnessed him leaving together with Gui Wusheng, nobody knew the outcome of the duel between the both of them. Fang Yuan could say that both of them were on par with each other and they fought till exhaustion.

But what about Gui Wusheng? The Five Ghosts Sect was crumbling and it would be normal for him to hide now, wouldn't it?

If it still looked suspicious, the rest could find the ghost of Gui Wusheng to testify.

"Next, if I were to remove all the traces I left behind here, that would be sufficient!"

Fang Yuan trekked through the forest and walked a big circle. He then exited the Xuanyan Mountain by another way and reached a nearby county. He then boarded a carriage and quickly went back to Qingye City.

.....

Days after, back at the inn where Fang Yuan was living in.

Fang Yuan, who was lying down, opened his eyes and was welcomed by a bright light.

"Hoo....."

Fang Yuan exhaled out a long breath and stretched himself.

"Once I have broken through the Death Gate, I will be reborn...I have finally attained [Martial Artist (8th Gate)], which is the Death Gate!"

He was not really surprised that he attained it.

After all, he was already in a state which he could attain a new level anytime.

In addition to the previous battles and the lessons learnt from the duel between Wu Zong and the spiritual disciple, his attainment was a matter of time.

Of course, the main contribution to his attainment was his daily intake of spiritual food, which allowed his foundations to become stronger and thus able to break through the Death Gate successfully!

Ever since he felt that he was ready to break through, Fang Yuan immediately found an inn and got the best room in the inn for him to prepare to break through.

This time, the breakthrough of the Death Gate was different for him as it felt as if he went for a nap.

Correct! He went for a nap!

If he was able to wake up from the nap, it meant that he broke through successfully. However, if he did not wake up, it meant he was dead!

Even though the concept was simple, it also had a possible scary outcome!

"Hmm?"

Fang Yuan got up and felt that both of his hands were sticky. It felt very uncomfortable and he rubbed his hands. A layer of dead skin then dropped off and it revealed a new layer of clear and bright skin.

"Reborn? I am really reborn!!!"

He looked at his hands happily and tore away the dead skin which was on his arm.

"Piak!"

It was as if a snake had changed its skin. On his arm, a layer of skin which contained traces of dirt and blood dropped off, revealing a smooth layer of new skin, perfect and without any scars on it.

"The cultivation of martial arts is actually considered a tough training. With a bit of talent, one can train his elemental force when he has attained Wu Zong....."

Fang Yuan gradually understood.

Under normal circumstances, most people would not be able to reach the lowest gate of a spiritual knight.

However, martial arts is different!

From the start, there were 3 gates, namely the Initial, Rest and Life. One who did not have prior experience would be able to break through and attain them in 3 years with hard work.

If one had prior experience, one could try to break through the Restriction Gate and strengthen one's inner power.

After the Pain Gate, one would have gained inner force and could improve his essence and spirit naturally. After the Death Gate, one's inner force would reach its peak.

Next, whether to take in both Yin and Yang or to combine them together, was part of the preparation needed to break through the Heaven Gate and train one's elemental force.

"This process is one step at a time and consists of 12 steps, which is different from the process which involves the spiritual disciple breaking through to become the spiritual knight. Hence, the former process is considered to be more favourable....."

At that moment, Fang Yuan did not look down on martial arts

but felt full of respect for the creation of the 12 Golden Gates in martial arts.

The creator had given many who did not have prior experience a straight pathway to attain the Heaven Gate!

Correct, the Heaven Gate!

Fang Yuan recalled that the Blood Killer looked at him with disdain and knew what kind of impression spiritual knights and sorcerers had on normal human beings.

Then what about normal human beings? If one was to be able to break through all 12 Golden Gates and attained Wuzong, one would become immortal and would be able to reach the heaven!

"The Yin Yang Jade can be used right after the 8th Gate!"

Fang Yuan was not as petty as Gui Wusheng. Gui Wusheng was reluctant to use it for himself but Fang Yuan had decided to use it immediately to speed up his training process.

Of course, before using it, he wanted to have a look again at his stats window.

His stats window then appeared in front of him:

"Name: Fang Yuan

Essence: 5.0

Spirit: 4.9

Magic: 3.3

Age: 19

Cultivation: [Martial Artist (8th Gate)]

Technique: [Black Sand Palm (Grade 5)], [Eagle Claw Iron Skin Technique (Grade 8)]

Skill: [Medicine (Level 3)], [Botany (Level 3)]"

"Eh? There is an increase in my magic, is it because of the

breakthrough of the Death Gate? Or is it due to the effect of the spiritual tea which was triggered during the breakthrough? Or is it both?"

His essence and spirit had increased tremendously and Fang Yuan had expected it.

What surprised him was that his magic had increased by 0.3.

After all, he did not have any other breakthroughs other than his previous breakthrough of the 7th Gate.

"However, this is normal anyway....The prerequisite to being a spiritual knight or a sorcerer was to have a high level of magic! How could martial arts only help to improve one's body condition? It definitely had to improve one's magic as well!"

"Or maybe....attaining the 4 Heavenly Gates was not only to combine the elemental force of Yin and Yang but also to improve one's magic to prepare oneself for Wu Zong...."

"The 12 Golden Gates; I have broken through the 8th gate which is the Death Gate. Next up will be the 9th Gate, which is the Yin Gate, and then the 10th Gate, which is the Yang Gate, and then the 11th Gate, which is the Earth Gate and lastly the 12th Gate, which is the Heaven Gate!"

Fang Yuan took out the Yin Yang Jade. The piece of Jade was perfect and it had both red and black textures in it, which made it special.

This piece of jade could speed up the combination of Yin and Yang for a [Martial Artist (8th Gate)]. This was one of the secret processes of the Five Ghosts Sect.

Even though the Five Ghosts Sect had wanted to use this piece of jade to attract its enemies, the jade landed into Fang Yuan's hands in the end.

"This jade.....seems to be used in this way!"

Fang Yuan murmured and shipped his inner force onto his palms.

At that moment, there was a conversion and his inner force that was actually in 7th Gate previously was now smoothly transferred to the 8th Gate.

He noticed a swirl in the inner part of the Yin Yang Jade with the combination of Yin and Yang.

"Go!"

Fang Yuan shipped his inner force into the circulation of the Yin and Yang and his inner force went one round in the circulation and then back into his body.

"Hiss..."

At that moment, he felt a cold stream down his arms and then to shoulders and his chest.....and then finally to his lower abdomen.

"Is this.....Yin?"

Fang Yuan looked at the Yin Yang Jade and the textures on the jadeite were still clear as before. It seemed like it had not been used before.

"According to the Iron Skin Technique and the manuals from the Spirit Returning Sect, if a [Martial Artist (8th Gate)] wants to make a breakthrough, he would have to train hard daily and endlessly. As such, he should be able to get the Yin into his body in half a month or so, but now....."

He looked at his stats window again.

He saw his proficiency points for [Eagle Claw Iron Skin Technique (Grade 8)] had increased by 1%.

"My intake of Yin this time equals to half a month of hard work by a normal [Martial Artist (8th Gate)]?"

Fang Yuan's eyes glittered and said, "This Yin Yang Jade is good stuff. The Five Ghosts Sect is indeed rich with treasures....."

In fact, he was being whimsical.

Even though Five Ghosts Sect was rich, the Yin Yang Jade was considered one of the most precious treasures in there and was hidden well. Normal elders would not have known this piece of jade.

If the purpose was not to attract the enemy, Gui Wusheng would not have brought the jade out.

Even so, Gui Wusheng only had the right of safekeeping it and not the right of using it.

"Gui Wusheng that stupid idiot. He was probably controlled by the Five Ghosts Sect Sect Master..."

Fang Yuan then came to a conclusion. "If one does not know how to appreciate the treasure, even if the treasure was a gift from heaven, the treasure would hurt one instead!"

He got up and opened the windows. He breathed in deeply and looked at the Lieyang County silently.

With the Five Ghosts Sect Sect Master and the Blood Killer dead, the Five Ghosts Sect had no leader. In addition to the attack by the Spirit Returning Sect, the Five Ghosts Sect would definitely split and it was a golden opportunity for one to take advantage of the situation!

Since the Five Ghosts Sect had a piece of Yin Yang Jade, maybe they would have a second or a third piece of the same jade or something similar in value....

Fang Yuan was too imaginative and he grew greedy.

"Hold on a second, I have gained a lot from this trip and I should reflect and plan my next moves, instead of finding ways to get even more such treasures."

Fang Yuan's eyes glittered and thought, "Looks like I have improved too quickly. I better return home to continue on my

cultivation, along with farming and making tea....."

Chapter 66: Cultivation

"Chirp!"

A black dot appeared in the blue sky and accompanying it, a bird's caw.

"Hu!"

A large eagle with metallic wings flew down and landed in front of Fang Yuan.

"I'm back!"

Fang Yuan walked forward and patted the Iron-tailed Black Eagle.

"Keke!"

Black Eagle did not appear to reject him, which pleased Fang Yuan, because he knew that they had gotten even closer than before.

"Is everything alright in the secluded valley?"

He took a few steps forward and reached the entrance. A white flash appeared and stopped at his legs. It was the Flower Fox Ferret.

All this while, they had no spiritual tea, and the two beasts also didn't know how to start a fire. They had no choice but to return to their old ways of hunting and eating meat raw and therefore, both of them longed for his return.

For instance, the Flower Fox Ferret had already caught two plump chickens and was waiting for Fang Yuan to cook them.

"Greedy fellow!"

Fang Yuan scolded him jokingly and entered his home.

Even though there were two spiritual beasts looking after the secluded valley, Fang Yuan was still worried and went around to

check on things.

He arrived at the farm and firstly went to look for the Questioning Heart Tea. He couldn't contain his excitement as he noticed small leaflets sprouting from the branches of the tree.

This trip made him realise the importance of having higher than average magic points.

He owed it all to his magic points that he could survive the ordeal this time.

"This tea should be spring tea, as the season is coming soon..."

Fang Yuan as extremely pleased, as he arrived at the farm and realised almost all the Vermilion Jade Rice had been harvested. However, the surroundings were not barren.

Shrubs of Emerald Grass were sprouting around the farm in an orderly manner, full of life.

"The Emerald Grass is growing rather well!"

As it was the lowest form among spiritual plants, it only two purposes was to cultivate a plot of land and also be harvested as food for spiritual beasts. Fang Yuan scanned the area and could not find any plant with evolved special traits, and was a little disappointed.

"Let's take a look at the spiritual bamboo!"

With shocking healing abilities, the bamboo fruit could even heal wounds caused by elemental forces, and this made Fang Yuan realise the importance of it.

As he approached the bridge, he was overwhelmed with joy.

Beside the rock, a green bamboo stood tall and strong. Its branches were emerald-green and had no signs of rotting.

"When a spiritual bamboo blooms, fruits will form. It would then rot and die after its fruits ripen, and re-sprout into a new spiritual bamboo... This is because it cannot receive enough nutrients to

sustain itself... But now, what is happening?"

Fang Yuan looked at his [Botany] and knew that this was one of the special traits that the spiritual bamboo evolved to have.

Even though the spiritual bamboo was not completely evolved, it already had certain traits of it being improved, and for instance this time, it did not rot.

"Keke!"

The Flower Fox Ferret pointed to a little bulge on the ground, as it tried to hint to Fang Yuan that it was something new.

"Eh? Could it be..."

Fang Yuan gently dug out the layer of soil above, and a purple shoot appeared.

"Indeed... When spring comes the bamboo will flourish, what an unexpected gain!"

It was different from the spiritual bamboo. Its bamboo trunk had a layer of purple and hidden within it, there was spiritual energy which emitted a pleasant fragrance.

"I could locate other bamboos by following its roots, and for this root..."

Fang Yuan followed then bamboo root and discovered a few more bamboo shoots. He gingerly covered the shoots with soil and was smiling from ear to ear.

"Keke.....Chirp Chirp..."

The Flower Fox Ferret was pulling at his clothes, its paws pointing about. Fang Yuan was amused, "You want to try the bamboo shoot?"

"Chirp Chirp!"

After hearing this, the black eagle at the side seemed to understand what was happening and appeared as excited as the

Flower Fox Ferret.

"You guys... This spiritual bamboo is a treasure, how can we kill the source of our food?"

Fang Yuan continued, "There's quite a lot of spiritual bamboo within the red-eyed white king bird's nest, as well as other spiritual things... When we have a chance, I shall bring you guys along to loot the entire place!"

With his improvements in martial arts and his two spiritual beasts, Fang Yuan started to have ideas on the Green Peak once again.

"Chirp Chirp!"

The Iron-tailed Black Eagle had bad blood with the red-eyed white birds all along and was excited at the thought of Fang Yuan's suggestion.

Even though they have decided on the plan, it still wasn't easy to deal with the red-eyed white king bird.

After all, the king bird was equivalent to a martial artist of the 4 Heavenly Gates and would be even more unpredictable when angered.

The Iron-tailed Black Eagle was extremely lucky to have escaped the previous ordeal, and there was no way it could have escaped again given the same situation.

Furthermore, Fang Yuan had just returned and he should be resting and recuperating.

...

"Phew... I am finally able to rest after this hectic period!"

The next day, Fang Yuan held a teacup, took a sip and was in deep relaxation.

"Spiritual bamboo shoots for breakfast, coupled with Meditative Questioning Heart Tea. Even the gods couldn't ask for this!"

After mulling over it for the whole night, he gave in to pressure from both the Flower Fox Ferret and the Iron-tailed Black Eagle, and the three of them enjoyed the bamboo shoots for breakfast.

Of course, it was the three of them sharing one shoot.

Fang Yuan was shocked to his wits.

Regardless the crunchy texture, or the milky fragrance, or the sweet sap, they were all on a different level.

Of course, he became extremely regretful after eating it.

His was afraid that he would not be able to resist eating the remaining shoots, and he felt that it was such a waste to eat the shoots and therefore lose the fruit that it would bear in the future.

"Both of you have gained quite a bit..."

Seeing the both of them drinking the spiritual tea, eating the spiritual bamboo and strengthening themselves, Fang Yuan admired them.

After all, the spiritual beasts were different from humans; there are no gates for them. As long as they eat and drink to their fill, and grow to a certain age, they would automatically attain a higher level.

Comparatively, he needed to train hard, and would, therefore, feel that he had no choice but to accept the fact.

As a cup of Questioning Heart Tea entered his stomach, he began to forget his worries.

After a long while, he slowly placed his teacup down, and heaved a long sigh.

"The higher my magic, the harder it would be to increase it... Furthermore, the effect of the Questioning Heart Tea slowly seems to be unable to satisfy me anymore..."

This was normal. As time passed, the spiritual plants which were able to increase one's magic would be treasured by many, and

would be called 'Deity Plants'.

Of course, being such a unique plant, the Questioning Heart Tea would definitely be beneficial to spiritual knights as well.

Fang Yuan realised that even though his body was less receptive to the Questioning Heart Tea, he could drink more of it instead of focusing in finding a better quality deity plant to replace it, and that would solve the problem.

"The most important thing now is to quickly break through the 4 Heavenly Gates! Fusing the Yin and Yang, to break the Earth Gate and Heaven Gate, all these should be extremely beneficial to my magic!"

After sorting out his thoughts, he crossed his legs and sat on the ground, and took out his Yin Yang Jade.

After playing around with the Jade, Fang Yuan knew how to use the Jade in general. Only the inner force of [Martial Artists (8th Gate)] would be able to enter the Jade, to be split it into Yin and Yang, and this would expedite the progress of cultivation by a thousand times.

"After the process, I would have lost around half of my Yang..."

The black and red stripes within the Jade became milder, and Fang Yuan felt that it was a pity.

Yin and Yang are the forces of the heavens, and they coexist, never alone but always together.

Whenever some Yin was taken, the same amount of Yang would be lost, in order for the forces within the Yin Yang Jade to remain balanced at all times.

As he had not broken the Yin Gate, he could only see the true Yang from the afternoon sun being lost, as he had no way to harness it.

"Keke!"

As he was sighing, a white flash appeared, and a paw came in contact with the Yin Yang Jade. It was the Flower Fox Ferret.

"Eh? What are you doing?"

Fang Yuan was confused, as he observed. The Flower Fox Ferret was actually harnessing the extra Yang for his own cultivation.

"Can spiritual beast cultivate their skills on their own?"

He felt that his view of the world was once again obsolete. The memories he had from another world made him aware that many demons would train under the moon, but this was the Yang from the sun, and it was completely different.

"Hiss!"

After taking in a shred of Yang, the Flower Fox Ferret held its breath, shook, and laid flat on the ground, as though it was drunk.

Fang Yuan had seen the Flower Fox Ferret in this state a few times before, while he was drinking the Questioning Heart Tea.

"It seems that it had entered a deep level of cultivation..."

Fang Yuan nodded his head, kept the Yin Yang Jade, and had a headache.

Afterall, there was another being at home who would be after his own treasures. To be on guard against it would not be easy.

Of course, he wasn't stingy about the Yang lost. To Fang Yuan, he would rather strengthen his spiritual pet than let it go to waste!

The only thing he was afraid about was that the beast might not be aware of how to harness it properly, and might take in too much Yang. This would not only spoil the Yin Yang Jade, but also harm the beast, and that wouldn't be worth it...

"Phew... If I continue to fuse my Yin every day, I should be able to achieve a breakthrough to 9th Gate in a few days time..."

Seeing the experience bar slowly being filled, Fang Yuan nodded

his head and started to train.

To a [Martial Artist (8th Gate)], taking in Yin was the hardest of all. The fusion was much easier, and after 2 hours, Fang Yuan completed his training for the day. He felt as though a clear river was flowing through him, and was immensely satisfied.

Since he was in such a good condition, he decided to take the opportunity and took out a piece of jade.

This jade was different from the Yin Yang Jade. It was squarish, and it was as though a golden coin was swirling within it. It was indeed the jade Fang Yuan obtained from the Blood Killer.

He was completely relaxed and wanted to unveil the mystery of this jade.

"There seems to be no carving on it, and it does not seem like a key..."

Fang Yuan sighed and suddenly stuck it on his own forehead. He focused his magic on his forehead, as though he was gathering and pushing the magic upwards physically.

"Rumble!"

...

...

...

After a long while, nothing happened.

Fang Yuan rolled his eyes, took the jade down, and felt a little disappointed. "Indeed, the memories from the other world shouldn't be taken too seriously. Using magic to understand jades, this was most likely bullshit from the author..."

Even though it was as such, he felt that he understood something else.

Within this jade, there must be a secret, and the only thing

lacking is the key to it.

Chapter 67: Mystery

"I'm here to see you, sir!"

Zhou Wenwu bowed respectfully and was also relieved to see Fang Yuan.

Previously, when Fang Yuan went out on a trip, Zhou Wenwu would feel unsafe. However, with Fang Yuan back, he felt much safer.

"Hmm!"

Fang Yuan crossed his knees and sat down. He then waved his hand and said, "How is everything in Lieyang County?"

He had about 10 days left before he had to go back to the sect. With the daily cultivations of body and soul, Fang Yuan's [Martial Artist (8th Gate)] was much more stable than before. With the intake of the Yin, he had improved tremendously.

Zhou Wenwu was affected the most by his improvement.

To him, Fang Yuan was way more superior than the dead Elder Song!

Upon hearing what Fang Yuan asked, he then answered immediately, "Ever since the news of the injured Five Ghosts Sect Sect Master spread, there was chaos everywhere in Lieyang County. Everyone in the Five Ghosts Sect were panicking and some of the disciples had decided to defect. Some of the elders stayed indoors while some went missing. Meanwhile, there were other forces getting ready to join in this mess....."

The situation was expected.

Without the suppression of the Five Ghosts Sect, the sect was already considered well organised if the sect did not split.

Also, there were loyal disciples who were still there, but there was a possibility that they might change their mindset as well.

"Is there any movement made from the Spirit Returning Sect?"

Logically speaking, Shi Yutong did not gain anything through this expedition and wouldn't go back to the sect so easily before she gained anything.

If there was the help of the mysterious spiritual knight, there would be a possibility of losing the two counties.

"Under the leadership of Spirit Returning Sect Sect Master, Spirit Returning Sect controls Shaoyang City and two of the quarries in Lieyang County. After which, there is not much movement from them....."

Zhou Wenwu was really telling everything that he knew about the sect.

"Really? It looks like the sect is confident in its preparation for its next move!"

Fang Yuan nodded his head upon hearing what Zhou Wenwu said. However, it was not an easy task for the sect take over the whole of Lieyang County. "But the sect only controls the two quarries.....but this should be sufficient for the sect to show its power. Very well!"

The more chaotic Lieyang County was, the more problematic it would become for the Spirit Returning Sect. However, to Fang Yuan, it would be more advantageous.

"Also, the Spirit Returning Sect incurred a big loss this time and even the Second Elder Han Yan was also injured badly and was currently recovering back in the sect. The sect was also on a lookout for any good doctors to help in the recovery and Master, please be extra careful!"

"One final thing....."

Zhou Wenwu hesitated for a while before he continued, "The sect secretly ordered for me to collect intelligence about you.....and it seemed like it was an order given by a series of Sect Masters!"

"A series of Sect Masters....if it was Shi Yutong, she wouldn't be so secretive about it. That means a certain person is very interested in me now?"

Fang Yuan stroked his chin and dismissed Zhou Wenwu. He then sighed and said, "Being too handsome is also a problem for me now...."

Jokes aside, he could sort of guess that this order was initiated by Lin Leiyue but it had nothing to do with the possibility that both of them still had feelings for each other.

Even if Fang Yuan had revealed a part of his ability, she would be very surprised by it and this would make her even more curious to find out more about Fang Yuan.

Outsiders wouldn't know how Fang Yuan was like in the past and would only know there was someone powerful in the secluded valley.

However, Lin Leiyue knew the background of Fang Yuan.

Since she knew Fang Yuan was also a normal person in the past, she would then be even more surprised with the improvements Fang Yuan had in his abilities and skills.

Fang Yuan had expected this to happen but didn't expect the other party to be so secretive in finding out more about himself. It seemed like Lin Leiyue was hiding a secret or something.

"Never mind.....I shall think of a solution on the spot when the time comes. I should get back to farming! And this....."

Fang Yuan flipped his hands and an emerald green jade appeared.

He looked at the golden textures on the piece of jade was mesmerised by it.

.....

Spring had arrived in March. Birds were flying and chirping everywhere.

Winter had passed and the flowers were blooming. Fang Yuan came to the Vermilion Jade Rice farm specially during this time.

Looking at the consolidated Emerald Grass, the farm hadn't become a waste as the colour of the soil remained pure black and it was still in good condition.

"This fertiliser.....has a beneficial effect on the farm!"

Fang Yuan wore a thick clothing. He carried a hoe and started to cultivate the Vermillion Jade Rice.

The seeds that were planted were chosen by him and were of high quality. The condition of the seeds remained well for a long period of time.

"I think there is no need for further expansion of the spiritual farm. The current size of the farm is sufficient....."

Beside him, the Flower Fox Ferret and the Iron-tailed Black Eagle were also helping out in the farming.

After a busy morning, Fang Yuan then made a pot of tea and enjoyed the tea with the other 2 spiritual beasts beside the spiritual farm.

"All the spiritual tea leaves have been picked. The bamboos are growing fast. I have also just planted the seeds for the spiritual rice and with the spiritual fertiliser added, this year's harvest should be a big one...."

Fang Yuan couldn't help but think of the Red-eyed White King Bird when he thought of the spiritual fertiliser.

Even though he already had plans to raid the nest once more, but with the Yin Yang Jade in his hands currently, he decided to postpone that plan and prepare himself for further improvements.

If he could break through the 4 Heavenly Gates, he would have no problem in dealing with the Red-eyed White King Bird.

Also, with the current happenings around him, he was not

thinking about expanding outwards.

There were dark clouds everywhere in the afternoon and it looked like it was about to rain. It was also humid and this made it easier to fall asleep.

Back in his home, Fang Yuan sat down and ordered the 2 spiritual beasts to keep a lookout outside. He looked at the emerald green jade and was mesmerised even further.

There was a cool stream flowing down his fingers as he touched the piece of jade and this made him alert and not sleepy anymore.

During this period of time, Fang Yuan had been searching for the secret of this piece of jade and now he had managed to learn something about this piece of jade.

"The main criteria for being a spiritual knight was one's magical energy.....Hence, one should start by improving the magical energy.....This piece of jade is indestructible and inner force cannot even destroy it. However....."

Fang Yuan took a copper basin and it contained a red liquid. The liquid gave off a fishy smell and it was actually blood.

"This Blood Killer is so secretive in his movements. He is slightly evil and now even the things that he brought along with is also slightly evil in nature....."

He came to this conclusion about the piece of jade that the Blood Killer had hidden in his body after many rounds of unsuccessful experiments with it.

"Ploop!"

He was expressionless and he dropped the piece of jade into the basin.

Fang Yuan then stared at the basin.

Not long after, there was a change in the basin.

The golden textures on the jade seemed to be moving about and

absorbing the blood as the colour of the liquid started to turn gold. Finally, the colour was back to blood red.

After a period of time, the emerald green piece of jade became red and the golden textures had become blood red in colour as well, which looked like the blood vessels of a person. The jade seemed evil.

"Are all spiritual knights.....that evil in nature?"

Fang Yuan then picked up the bloody jade and washed it with clean water.

The bloody jade was fine and glossy. The red textures in it were slightly moving and that made it a special jade.

"There is not much change!"

Fang Yuan placed the jade under the sun and couldn't find any handwriting or symbols. Even his inner force couldn't be shipped into the piece of jade.

He experimented for quite a while and then placed it on his forehead, in between his eyebrows while biting his teeth.

The position he placed the jade was called Yintang in traditional Chinese medicine. That position was also called Mind Palace in the world of inner power. This was an important acupuncture point as this was where one's essence, spirit and magic met. One who was highly skilled in medicine could decipher how strong a person is from his or her Yintang.

In this world, there was also another name for it, called 'Heaven's Eye'!

This name originated from an old anecdote. The anecdote stated that in the past, there was an immortal person who had three eyes. After generations, the Heaven's Eye closed gradually.

Whether the anecdote was real or fake, Fang Yuan was not really bothered by it. However, with his magical energy being

concentrated between his eyebrows, he could observe his surroundings and hide.

"Pah!"

The position where he placed the bloody jade gave off a cooling sensation.

Fang Yuan concentrated his magical energy from the Mind Palace and started to explore the secrets of the bloody jade.

"Bang!"

A loud noise then came from his mind.

There were no obstructions this time and his spiritual mind managed to reach into the jade.

Fang Yuan felt as if he reached a chaotic space and there were numerous red handwriting appearing right in front of him. The handwritings were about a form of technique.

"It's the Blood Magic Technique; Focused Magic Returning Scroll!"

At the start, a few of the handwritings were big in size, which made it very visible. The handwritings brought about a tense atmosphere and this caused Fang Yuan to be in shock.

He continued on looking at the handwriting and realised that the Blood Magic Technique taught one on how to concentrate one's magical energy and attained the level of a spiritual knight!

However, it was not easy to attain it as the criteria required one to have magical energy that was beyond a normal human being. Furthermore, it was almost impossible for one to have such great amount of magical energy.

Also, the training process was gory. One example would be the 'Blood Elemental Force'. One would have to concentrate 3 Yang and 7 Yin as a blood sacrifice. 10 sets of blood from 10 different people would be needed to build the foundations. The entire

process was extremely cruel and the crueller the victims were treated, the higher the probability of success.

Seeing this, Fang Yuan frowned.

He knew that his character was not good in nature but if he were to execute this process, it would not do any good to his morals anyway.

After a long while, Fang Yuan then placed the bloody jade down and his face was pale white. He then shook his head and said, "Blood Magic Technique is way too evil and cruel. The risks are too high....."

Even though this technique was very cruel, there were recordings at the back of the scroll which stated some tips used by different spiritual knights and disciples of different magical energy. The tips were also used along with other medicine and tools. The scroll also mentioned the formula on how to make the Crazy Blood Pill. This caused Fang Yuan to be interested in the scroll again.

Without knowing it, he had almost exhausted his magical energy and knew the hardships of a spiritual knight.

With his current level, he had already exhausted his elemental energy. Under normal circumstances, normal people would not have been able to discover the secrets of this jade, not to mention about using it for training.

Chapter 68: Flame Jade

"Although I can't learn the Blood Magic Technique, the description of the uses of magical energy is still useful, maybe I can learn from it..."

After unveiling the secrets of the jadeite, he focused his energy on understanding the Blood Magic Technique.

Based on his prediction and the inscriptions on the jadeite, Fang Yuan was sure that the Blood Magic Technique was not a widely circulated technique among the spiritual knight community; it was merely a technique for those who wanted to hastily improve their skill through other means possible.

"In this Focused Magic Returning Scroll, there are only two steps. The first is to focus one's Blood Elemental Force and become a spiritual disciple. The second step would be to break through and become a spiritual knight..."

Thinking of the scroll's description, Fang Yuan shook his head.

Compared to the 12 Golden Gates, the cultivation method of the spiritual knights only consists of one step. If one did not have immense potential, it would be impossible.

"As for the training methods of elemental force, some of it might be relevant for me..."

Once a martial artist fused his Yin and Yang, and then through the Earth and Heaven, he would have formed elemental force.

The Blood Magic Technique's description of harnessing the elemental force was entirely relevant and could be followed to the tee.

After all, Fang Yuan had enough magic, comparable to that of a spiritual disciple.

The Blood Magic Technique was not something suitable for him,

and if he wasn't desperate enough, he wouldn't try to learn it.

"However, as for elemental force... It is something of a higher tier than inner force. It is sometimes called Heaven and Earth's spiritual force, and its potential is immense and cannot be fathomed..."

Fang Yuan had witnessed a battle between Wu Zongs and a spiritual disciple and was extremely looking forward to attaining a whole new level as what he saw.

"Based on my potential, it should be possible for me to start gathering my elemental force!"

This was the final conclusion he ended up with after reading about the Blood Magic Technique and based on his own martial arts experience.

Although he could not adopt the training methods of the spiritual disciple wholesale, he could adapt it to his own training to expedite his progress.

After all, the Eagle Claw Iron Skin Technique could only break through 12 Gates, but to break through Wu Zong it was impossible.

In addition, the Spirit Returning Heart Manual that Fang Yuan had was also incomplete, and it was the important parts that were missing.

He had to plan for his future.

"Of course, I must not neglect my Meditative Tea Ceremony... especially the cultivation of the mind."

The only useful power would be power that one could control. Fang Yuan did not want to lose control of his mind, especially when getting involved with this type of magic technique. Even though he was only adapting from it, he still had to take precautions.

...

The next few days were devoted to understanding the Blood Magic Technique.

This technique was a spiritual knight technique which required a deep understanding of it. Even though he was only adapting from it, he had to understand the entire technique, which led to him even sacrificing his sleep and meals, which showed the extent he devoted to understanding the technique. He had no further energy to find trouble for others.

"The 12 Golden Gates is merely a process to harness elemental energy. For a martial artist with average potential, he would have to take it step by step. As for the spiritual knights who have higher potential, they would ultimately end up on the same path... In theory, if I focused my elemental energy, I could instantly become Wu Zong! What a pity... The 3 Yins and 7 Yangs sacrifice as described in the Blood Magic Technique is full of implications, and other problems may surface, I cannot practice it..."

As he was farming he was mulling over this problem.

"As of now I have accumulated enough Yin, and I just need to wait for the right moment to break through into the 9th Gate and become a martial artist of the 4 Heavenly Gates..."

If this news spread, the entire Qinghe County would be in shock!

After all, what was the whole concept of the 4 Heavenly Gates? Within the Spirit Returning Sect or the Five Ghosts Sect, he would be top 5! It was no longer the majority of the martial artists, but the pinnacle!

If Secluded Mountain Prefecture knew about it, they would take Fang Yuan as the most talented young man in the martial arts world. Lin Huang or Lin Leiyue wouldn't even be considered.

Even as such, Fang Yuan didn't care much.

In his mind, he had a crazy plan.

"What's so great about breaking through the 9th Gate? 10th Gate,

the Yang Gate, and 11th Gate the Earth Gate are all actually pathways to harness the elemental force, or should I say, the seeds to elemental force! Although I have no intention to learn the Blood Magic Technique, with the assistance of the Yin Yang Jade to fuse my Yin and Yang, it would be possible to obtain elemental force and attain the next level, the Earth Gate!"

Fang Yuan's eyes was filled with passion.

To focus his elemental energy and break through Wu Zong was too large a step. Furthermore, he had little information and fully based his assumptions on what was written on the Blood Magic Technique manual, and he wasn't convinced.

It would be different at the Earth Gate!

This Gate required the fusion of Yin and Yang to produce the seeds of elemental force. This would fulfil a large requirement to break through the Earth Gate.

With the Yin Yang Jade, he had enough knowledge of the Yin and Yang.

The most important was that he had the guidance of the Blood Magic Technique, and had no qualms about focusing his elemental force, so what considerations would he have in harnessing the seeds of the elemental force?

"If the plan works, I can break both the 10th Gate and the Earth Gate one after another!"

"If my guess is correct, the breaking through of the Heaven Gate is actually breaking through the control of Mind Palace! One's magical energy would be surge, and when a martial artist reaches this stage, even if he loses focus he would recover in no time. He would have the chance to break through to Wu Zong and have the chance to harness elemental force... This is no problem to me!"

Fang Yuan heaved a long sigh.

To him, understanding the 12 Golden Gates were as simple as

flipping his palm to look at his fingerprints, and he had no other doubts.

"Eh?"

He was stunned for a moment and looked at the farm.

After a downpour, the Vermilion Jade Rice seedlings began to sprout furiously in neat rows.

There was a particular patch which seemed empty, and it was as though the spiritual plants were dead.

Not just the Vermilion Jade Rice, but even the Emerald Grass had signs of withering.

"Could it be..."

Fang Yuan wasn't disappointed; instead, he was rather excited about it as he rushed forward to examine it up close.

Indeed, in the middle of the barren patch were flame-like seedlings standing out, extremely eye-catching.

Fang Yuan examined it further and realised that it was shorter than the average seedling. It was a deep orange, with a streak of gold in the middle. The colour was extremely vibrant, like a flame.

Comparing the Vermilion Jade Rice to it would be like comparing the eyeball of a fish to a pearl. They were of a totally different level.

"Haha..."

Fang Yuan smiled as he saw the seedlings before him, and not long later, he could no longer contain his laughter and started to burst out laughing.

"Indeed... It's a spiritual plant evolving a special trait! Level up!"

The Vermilion Jade Rice was a spiritual plant to begin with, and what entails after evolving the second time? Fang Yuan looked forward to it.

After all, this was still spiritual rice!

It was different from the bamboo fruit and other spiritual medicine. This was milder in magical energy and could be produced in masses and consumed daily!

This would be a priceless treasure for those big sects!

"Hmm, this seedling evolved from the Vermilion Jade Rice and is even better than it, I shall name it 'Flame Jade Rice'!"

After a long period of examination, Fang Yuan stood up, swept the dirt away and looked around at the withered plants, looking helpless. "After evolving, the spiritual plant would steal the elemental energy from its surroundings. Both the Vermilion Jade Rice and Emerald Grass failed to survive..."

His thoughts linked to the bamboo fruit that he was holding in his hands all along.

It would not grow if it was planted here. Ultimately, the Flame Jade Rice was just a little better than the Vermilion Jade Rice.

What made Fang Yuan speechless was the fact that only one of the many evolved!

How many grains would there be? And how many batches did he plant already?

He might not even be able to harvest a bowl of Flame Jade Rice! Therefore, the priority now was for him to focus his efforts to let it grow, replant all the harvest and after a few seasons, only then would he start to consume it.

"Ultimately, it would be a gain, just that the starting would be a little troublesome..."

Fang Yuan bit his teeth and looked around. "Hmm... Given the surroundings of the secluded valley, it is impossible to plant the Flame Jade Rice in large scales!"

Unknowingly, he looked towards the mountainous ridges of the

Clear Spirit Mountain.

....

"I want to meditate and break through gates, I wouldn't be too worried if both you are guarding the secluded valley!"

After a good meal of Vermilion Jade Rice, Fang Yuan called to the Flower Fox Ferret and the Iron-tailed Black Eagle. "There is one thing you two should take note. Do not harm the spiritual bamboo, spiritual tea, spiritual rice, and especially the Flame Jade Rice! Remember, if you want to have a taste of it in the future, you need to listen to me!"

It was rare that he was fierce to the two spiritual beasts.

The two spiritual beasts were not stupid and knew that they should not jeopardise their long-term benefits just for short-term satisfaction.

Fang Yuan closed the curtains and cleared his mind.

This was the state of mind that he achieved through years of cultivation under the Meditative Tea Ceremony. Within seconds, all cluttered thoughts were cleared and peace was restored in his mind.

After these few months of cultivation and training, he knew that his foundation was stable. Although he felt nothing, he knew that the previous time he ate the spiritual bamboo, his elemental energy had improved.

At the 8th Gate, his abdomen was filled with Yin, and this was the perfect opportunity to break through!

Fang Yuan sat down as he tried to feel for the spiritual feeling. Within his body, the Yin energy swirled within him, as it began to fuse with his inner force. They were now a single entity.

...

Unknowingly, it was daybreak and the sunlight peered through

his curtains.

"Kacha!"

Fang Yuan, who was sitting down on the ground, let out a long sigh.

"Whiz!"

A white flash as agile as an arrow shot out, and all around him, he felt cold, which lowered the temperature in the entire room.

"After fusing my Yin, would there be any changes to my stats window?"

Fang Yuan mumbled to himself, stood up, and felt newfound strength within him as he nodded his head. "The 9th Gate, completed!"

Chapter 69: Elder Han

"How far is Qingye City from here?"

Along the old pathway, there were a few carriages moving. Suddenly, a pale hand stretched out and opened the curtains, which revealed a pair of eyes.

The hand was so pale that it looked as if it had lost a great amount of blood. The blood vessels along the arm were also visible.

The person whose hand was pale had a strange voice. His old raspy voice had a slight hint of youthful vigour in it. He was already panting after saying a few words, which clearly suggested that he was easily short of breath.

"Elder Han please hold on, we will be there in a few hours time!"

The person who was at the helm of the carriage was Lu Zhisen, who went to the secluded valley to seek medical attention previously.

The only difference was that now he was being polite and respectful instead of his usual recklessness.

"Hurhur....that's good....after all, we have Lin Leiyue with us on this trip. Once we reached back home, you should have a big reunion with Minister Lin....."

Elder Han looked middle-aged. His lips were red and his teeth were white. He had a beautifully shaped pair of eyes. With his pale cheeks, his facial features were handsome in a feminine way. This effeminate side of him was accentuated whenever he covered his mouth when he coughed gently. Even Lu Zhisen was disgusted by this.

However, no matter how courageous he was, he wouldn't dare to do anything to Elder Han who had attained the 4 Heavenly Gates in the Spirit Returning Sect.

"Elder Han, you are being too polite!"

Lin Leiyue was riding on a red date coloured horse previously and galloped forward respectfully after hearing what Elder Han said.

In the sect, she was the junior of both Elder Yan and Elder Han. After all, to an expert in 4 Heavenly Gates, even the direct disciple of the sect head was not on the same level unless the disciple had very exceptional abilities.

"Cough....no harm.....hurhur....."

Elder Han wanted to say something but his expression changed. He then started coughing and covered his mouth with a piece of white handkerchief.

After which, he saw blood on the handkerchief.

"Elder Han....."

Lin Leiyue got anxious and said, "Have your injuries worsened?"

"Hurhur....hurhur....I won't die don't worry....."

Elder Han waved his hands and replied proudly. "Hehe....the vice head of the Five Ghosts Sect's Soul Searching Hand was indeed powerful. Unfortunately for him, I was still more superior and managed to kill him. If the vice sect head was slightly more powerful, I would probably not be able to survive. Even if I managed to survive, I would probably be a vegetarian from then onwards....."

Even though he sounded defeated, Lin Leiyue still respected him.

After all, Elder Han got hold of his position as an elder in the sect 50 years ago and definitely had a vast experience in martial arts. Even though he was older than Lady Yan, he was still able to defeat many good young martial artists. Everybody in the Qinghe County would be afraid when they heard his name.

He was in such a state because he was ambushed by the Five Ghosts Sect.

"Please don't worry, Elder Han. This doctor in the secluded valley is highly skilled and can cure many illnesses. He was also the one who cured Elder Zhao previously!"

Lu Zhisen said, "You are highly skilled and with the help of the doctor, you should be able to recover in no time!"

"Haha....thanks for your well wishes!"

Elder Han smiled but his deep expression showed that he seemed to be thinking of something else.

Lin Leiyue didn't seem to notice his expression and pondered over her thoughts silently. "Even though Elder Han had managed to defeat the vice sect head, one other person still managed to escape and this would mean serious trouble for the sect. Plus, with both Elder Yan and Elder Han being injured right now, the attacking power of the sect would be less.....Both elders had not recovered from their injuries and the doctors in the sect had no solutions to help them. This doctor in the secluded valley would be our final hope then....."

As compared to Elder Han's injuries, Lady Yan's injuries were worse when she was fighting against a few experts.

However, Song Zhong was part of her faction previously, but he was killed by Fang Yuan.....

Not to mention anything about grudges but she would mind.

Even if Fang Yuan was willing to treat her, she would probably not trust Fang Yuan fully and she would think that Fang Yuan would do something harmful to her.

After all, if a doctor wanted a person to die without being identified as the murderer, the doctor would have many ways to do it.

In fact, Shi Yutong actually had another choice which was to seek medical attention from the alchemy master who had previously helped Lin Leiyue.

However, the alchemy master was a carefree person and isolated himself from the outside world. Plus the alchemy master had other commitments and why would the alchemy master accept a request made by the Spirit Returning Sect?

Previously, the alchemy master owed Shi Yutong a favour which was why he agreed to help Lin Leiyue. Since now the favour had been returned, it would be harder to ask the alchemy master for help.

"Elder Han, this doctor has a weird attitude and he set many rules...."

The memories of him being scolded by the doctor were still vivid in his mind. Lu Zhisen touched his head and remarked.

"Don't worry, I do understand. After all, I'm the one that require his help now...."

Elder Han smiled and looked at Lin Leiyue. "Lin Leiyue, I heard you were once engaged to this doctor and you even went to Shaoyang City?"

Upon hearing this, Lin Leiyue blushed. "Yes, you are correct!"

"That is unfortunate...."

Elder Han closed his eyes and didn't know who should he feel unfortunate for, Lin Leiyue or Fang Yuan.

'This person is mysterious. The head of the sect had instructed to keep Fang Yuan for the sect's use....at least not to let him go to the enemy's side....and also to find out the secret behind his fast advancement in his skills.....'

He then returned to his previously relaxed posture and gazed out at Qingye City in hopelessness.

.....

Back in the secluded valley.

"Hoo.....Haa....."

Fang Yuan was half naked and was regulating his breathing.

"Chirp! Chirp!"

Iron-tailed Black Eagle flew down from above. Its claws were like hooks and with its fast speed, it was indeed a powerful eagle.

"Keke!"

On the ground, a white light flashed past very quickly.

"You came just in time!"

With the attacks from air and land by the 2 spiritual beasts, a normal expert in 4 Heavenly Gates would also be confused.

However, Fang Yuan couldn't wait to take action when he saw this.

"Iron Skin Technique!"

He breathed in and could feel the energy surging. He then stepped his right leg out and the ground beside his leg split.

"Piak!"

The clothing on his leg immediately broke into pieces and it revealed his muscular legs and tightened skin. He was not injured at all.

"Hissss..."

The Flower Fox Ferret retreated and looked as if it had incurred a big loss.

"Hoo! Hoo!"

Just when it had just retreated by a few steps, a strong wind came and a giant eagle's claws came pouncing down.

"Haha....."

Fang Yuan laughed and lifted his right hand with his left hand at the bottom. This formed an eagle's claw shape and he aimed it at the sky.

"Chirp! Chirp!"

When the giant eagle's claws came, Fang Yuan's eyes glittered and grabbed with both his hands. "You better come down now!"

"Swish! Swish!"

Fang Yuan's attack was strong and swift. Both of his hands managed to grab hold of the giant eagle's claws and he lifted the claws fiercely.

"Bang!"

The Iron-tailed Black Eagle then fell to the ground forcefully.

With such strong impact, the Iron-tailed Black Eagle couldn't hold any longer even though it had tough bones. It let out a cry to admit defeat.

"Keke!"

The Flower Fox Ferret immediately raised both of its claws to admit defeat.

"Fine, I shall stop.....I was just warming up actually....."

Fang Yuan stopped and saw both the Flower Fox Ferret and the Iron-tailed Black Eagle were trembling. They were obviously injured by Fang Yuan's inner force. Fang Yuan then went forward and treat them.

'The inner force of an expert in 4 Heavenly Gates changes and is different from a normal inner force. Such inner force can defeat a low skilled martial artist easily....Of course, no matter what changes there are, elemental force is way superior compared to inner force and both types of forces are of different levels.....'

Fang Yuan gradually understood how it felt to be a [Martial Artist (9th Gate)].

Through his tough training, his skills had surpassed the two spiritual beasts and that meant a lot to him.

At least, the spiritual beasts which were previously living in the forests knew the concept of 'the weak losing out to the stronger ones'. They might become friends with humans but having a weakling to become their master was unacceptable!

The first step to tame a spiritual beast was to show one's dominance over it!

Similarly, in this case, Fang Yuan felt that the way the Iron-tailed Black Eagle looked at him was different now. The Iron-tailed Black Eagle was less proud now.

"With my current skills and the 2 spiritual beasts, dealing with the Red-eyed White King Bird shouldn't be a big problem for me now...."

Upon reaching this conclusion, Fang Yuan was slightly hesitant instead.

Even though he already had plans to take over the Green Peak, the Red-eyed White King Bird could, after all, fly. If he missed his shot and caused it to escape elsewhere, wouldn't he have to fear of it coming back in future?

"It is better for me to break through the 11th Gate first before moving on to take over the Green Peak!"

Fang Yuan wavered and looked at his stats window:

"Name: Fang Yuan

Essence: 5.9

Spirit: 5.8

Magic: 3.5

Age: 19

Cultivation: [Martial Artists (9th Gate)]

Technique: [Black Sand Palm (Grade 5)], [Eagle Claw Iron Skin Technique (Grade 9)] (with the addition of Yin's inner force)

Skill: [Medicine (Level 3)], [Botany (Level 3)]"

"The 4 Heavenly Gates, which was after the Death Gate, did actually help to improve my magic!"

Even though this was not the first time he saw his magic increase by a little, he felt happy still when he saw the increase.

From his conjecture, he had realised that attaining the 12 Golden Gates was similar to becoming a spiritual knight. This would allow a normal human being to become powerful.

As such, the process not only helped to condition one's body and also improve one's magic.

However, he didn't expect this feature to only appear when approaching the 4 Heavenly Gates.

"With such big magnitude, it would still be difficult to attain the standard of a spiritual knight even if one was able to break through the Heaven Gate....."

This was the reason why there were many martial artists who were of [Martial Artist (12th Gate)] but there was no one in Wu Zong.

The Heaven Gate was difficult to break through! Attaining Wu Zong was even tougher!

Chapter 70: Xuan Yin

After many days.

Fang Yuan was seated on an emerald rock and was frowning, as though he had doubts.

"After the 9th Gate, the next step is to harness the Yin to break the Yang Gate. But in order to fuse the Yin and Yang to form the elemental force while breaking through the Gate, I will need some help..."

Although Fang Yuan had the spiritual knight's Blood Magic Technique, it was ultimately different from true martial arts.

The highest Gate he could attain through the Eagle Claw Iron Skin Technique was the 12th Gate. There was no chance of him breaking through Wu Zong, and realizing the true elemental force.

The only chance Fang Yuan had was through the Spirit Returning Heart Manual, which was incomplete. He felt that it was such a pity.

"The Spirit Returning Heart Manual is passed down by word, so must I really kidnap a Spirit Returning Sect disciple or elder to question him?"

He had a wild thought but dismissed it quickly.

"Chirp! Chirp!"

At this moment, there was a strong gust of wind as the Iron-tailed Black Eagle landed on the ground, chirping at Fang Yuan.

"Oh? Is someone arriving?"

Fang Yuan waved and sat down.

"Gong Gong!"

"Clang Clang!"

The sound of deafening gongs was heard from a distance and it

drew nearer and nearer to the secluded valley.

"Another one who is giving me more experience...!"

Fang Yuan took a quick glance at his experience bar, and [Medicine] was filled up to a large extent and was almost equal to that of [Botany]. He laughed, stood up and walked out of the valley.

"Someone from the Spirit Returning Sect?"

In the pavilion, a crowd was waiting patiently and followed the rules. The one in front was his acquaintance, Lu Zhisen.

"The doctor has arrived!"

The usually rash Lu Zhisen became excited and greeted Fang Yuan the moment he saw him.

"Oh, it's Elder Lu. Who's injured this time?"

Fang Yuan was direct, but none of the Spirit Returning Sect's disciples took it to heart. After all, a doctor who could make miracles would be rather different from other normal doctors.

"Cough cough... it's me!"

The disciples made way and revealed an Elder Han in a wheelchair.

"I am injured and cannot properly offer you a greeting, please don't take it to heart!"

Elder Han clenched his fist and greeted Fang Yuan. He appeared humble, which surprised Elder Lu and the other sect disciples.

Lin Leiyue was not here. When they returned to Qingye City, she immediately returned to her home. Even though she made the excuse up, it was clear why she didn't come along with the rest.

"A doctor should have care like parents, why would I blame you!"

Fang Yuan intentionally deepened his voice and noticed Elder Han twitched his eyebrows as he laughed. It seemed that he agreed with Fang Yuan, but deep down knew that he was scheming and

might not be that easy to deal with.

"Please!"

After he brought the patient into the Straw Pavilion, he felt his pulse. "Elder Han had sustained an internal injury for quite a while now, this is hard..."

At the same time, he felt emotional, for he had seen every elder, including the Sect Master of the Spirit Returning Sect.

"Doctor, you are indeed impressive. This injury was from the Five Ghosts Sect assistant Sect Master! Cough Cough..."

Elder Han explained, and Lu Zhisen revealed a delicate box.

"I've heard of your rule, and have no intention of breaking it. I present to you the Xuan Yin Heart Technique Manual, and hope you will accept it..."

Elder Han continued. "This heart manual came from the Five Ghosts Sect and can be cultivated up till the realm of Wu Zong without any problem. Furthermore, this is a complete copy of the manual. I've heard that you rendered assistance to Lin Leiyue at Shaoyang City, and I shall thank you for that. Please accept this manual as a form of my gratitude... Regardless if I will recover in the future, I shall send more gifts, which will surely satisfy you!"

"Xuan Yin Heart Technique? The Five Ghost Sect's true magical technique?"

Fang Yuan was surprised and received the box. As he opened it, he saw a black scroll within, filled with tiny words describing the 12 Golden Gates as well as Wu Zong. Based on his current experience he could only understand the first few lines and knew that this was the real deal.

"This present... is worth too much!"

He closed the wooden box and had a serious tone. "Elder Han, are you sure you are willing to give this technique manual to me?"

Won't there be implications? Furthermore, I know that any manual with the sect's special technique that is able to break through to Wu Zong would surely be incomplete, and had to be filled up by the word of mouth and cannot be written down, am I right?

What was a sect's special technique?

This meant that if Fang Yuan was willing, he could base solely on this technique to start his own sect!

This kind of sect foundation was akin to a magical weapon, so how could one give it up so easily?

"Doctor Fang is indeed wise!"

Hearing how Fang Yuan understood the crux, Elder Han's eyes glittered. "This technique was stolen by myself, and since the Five Ghost Sect is almost destroyed now, you can accept this gift without any worry for no one will find trouble with you... And as for the incomplete manual, I have already filled it up personally, and you can try it out to see for yourself, it would be fine..."

"Filled up?"

Fang Yuan frowned.

"That's right... I only had to capture a few disciples of the Five Ghosts Sect to obtain the remaining information, nothing too difficult..."

Elder Han laughed while Fang Yuan remained silent.

After capturing these people, there was no need for torture. They would automatically sell out their sect to ensure their own safety and preserve their own life.

'This came at such a good time...'

After all, he was looking for a technique that could attain Wu Zong. Never would he have dreamt that someone would deliver it to him. What a blessing!

Furthermore, Elder Han was an extremely suitable patient for him to test his skills on!

After fusing the Yin and Yang, seeds of the elemental force would develop to break through the Earth Gate. This was Elder Han, a [Martial Artist (11th Gate)]. But now, he had no strength and had to succumb under Fang Yuan's hands; what a scene!

'A martial artist of Earth Gate would have already harnessed elemental energy, and by observing this person's blood circulation and inner force, I can test my hypothesis further!'

Fang Yuan felt warm, and his glare made Elder Han feel uncomfortable for a moment.

"Please leave, I will start now..."

Fang Yuan retrieved his golden needles, told Lu Zhisen in a serious tone.

"Oh! Very well!"

Even though he wanted to watch Fang Yuan, he wasn't a fool and politely left the Straw Pavilion. He even closed the door after him, but no one really knew what he was thinking about.

"I will use my Golden Needle Acupoint Piercing Technique. If you feel any pain, do not use your elemental force to counter it, just relax and let nature take its course!"

Fang Yuan spun around and was uncertain. Even though Elder Han was powerful, he was powerless here. "I'm afraid that in your current state, even if you wanted to move you wouldn't be able to..."

"Very well!"

Fang Yuan's hands worked extremely fast, and 2 golden needles made their way towards Elder Han's forehead.

"Eh?!"

Elder Han's face twitched, remained motionless and fainted.

"Ping!"

His body fell to the ground. Fang Yuan first observed his palms as he appeared light-hearted. "You may seem to trust me completely, but you took precautions against me... Of course, it may be your habit as you roam the martial arts world for the many years, but I'll let you know that your precautions were right..."

With such a good test subject in front of him, why would he not take full advantage of it?

Since he decided to make use of him, keeping him awake would be troublesome, so why not just make him faint?

"This is the rights of a doctor. Whatever I do is for your own good!"

Fang Yuan looked at the defenceless Elder Han, and his smile grew...

...

"Creak!"

After a while.

The door to the hut opened and revealed a somewhat exhausted Fang Yuan.

"Doctor, how is Elder Han?"

An anxious Lu Zhisen came over.

"It was fortunate!"

Fang Yuan wiped his fake sweat and smiled. "Bring him home first. After 7 days, return here for me to perform my acupoint piercing once again. Coupled with medicinal herbs, he should recover fully in half a year..."

Illness and injury might come in an instant, but recovering would take very much longer. Lu Zhisen understood that.

Thinking about how the people within the sect were all helpless

when facing Elder Han, Elder Lu gained even more respect for Fang Yuan. He bowed, came into the hut and saw Elder Han lying there with a weak breath. His face had more life now, and Lu Zhisen was glad. "Thank you, doctor! I will return after 7 days!"

He then ordered the disciples of the Spirit Returning Sect to put down all their gifts and brought Elder Han back.

Fang Yuan sent them off, and only after they have disappeared from sight, Fang Yuan revealed a sinister smile.

It was true that Elder Han's injury was hard to treat. If he did use his true [Medicine] skills, it would only take him half a month to save him. However, he wanted to delay his recovery so that he could use him more often as a test subject.

"Furthermore... This person has his guard up against me!"

What Elder Han did previously had worried Fang Yuan a little.

After all, he was the Spirit Returning Sect's Elder, who commanded a high position within the sect. His attitude would be equivalent to the Spirit Returning Sect's attitude, and so Fang Yuan could guess what the sect's impression of him was.

"This was reasonable though..."

Fang Yuan thought about this. If he was the sect and an uncontrollable factor appeared, he would be likely to react the same way as the sect.

The sect only had the intention to test him for now, and might even want to have him as an ally, but as for the future, no one knew.

"The good thing is that I have gained so much this time, therefore my prediction could be true!"

Thinking about his own little experiment, Fang Yuan clenched his fist in excitement.

Elder Han even volunteered himself as a test subject, which was

of a great help to Fang Yuan.

After all, he could conclude that it was indeed possible to directly harness the seeds of elemental force. This was even more so after obtaining the Xuan Yin Heart Technique; it was as though the last piece of the puzzle appeared.

"Hmm, even Shi Yutong wouldn't have guessed that I only cared about how to breakthrough to Wu Zong, and not any other secret martial arts manuals. With the Blood Magic Technique as a reference, any wrongly filled up information would not be able to escape my eyes... Of course, I will have to take precautions against this Elder Han too!"

After thinking, Fang Yuan returned to the secluded valley, changed to a new set of clothes, ordered the Flower Fox Ferret to look after the house, and started to chase and follow the Spirit Returning Sect party.

Chapter 71: True Intentions

It was a peaceful night in Qingye City.

Lin family's mansion was located in the central of the city. After the incident of Song Zhong and the collapse of Zhou family, Lin Benchu and Lin Dayuan were successful and managed to hold a strong image for the family. They even redecorated their entrance door and added a pair of green lion statues right outside the door.

Fang Yuan was familiar with this place. Back when he was a child, he visited this place before with Master Wenxin.

At this point, Elder Han and a few disciples from the Spirit Returning Sect were seeking shelter here as well.

Fang Yuan waited till the right time before he changed into his night combat outfit. He then snuck into the Lin family's mansion and ignored the guards and the disciples from the Spirit Returning Sect.

Even though it was late into the night, a few rooms were still lit.

Fang Yuan randomly glanced at his surroundings and snuck into Minister Lin's study room.

"Hoo! Hoo!"

He jumped softly and reached the roof. He then lifted one of the green tiles from the roof and looked inside the room.

Minister Lin was rich all of a sudden. Although his study room was messy and the books were piled up at a corner, there were many expensive decorations and antiques placed around the room.

Also, there was another person standing right in front of Elder Lin.

"Lin Leiyue! She is here also?"

Fang Yuan wavered slightly.

Of course, he was a [Martial Artist (9th Gate)] and both the father and the daughter didn't notice him yet.

"What? You haven't make a breakthrough?"

Minister Lin listened to what his daughter said and he gave a worried face.

Even though he became rich overnight, he knew that if his daughter still did not manage to make a breakthrough in time, her position in the Spirit Returning Sect would not be stable.

She was representing the Lin family, and if she did lose her position, the consequences would be dire.

"Don't worry daughter....what exactly happened? With your talents....with your talents....."

Minister Lin wanted to add on but he knew nothing about the concept of her being a spiritual being. He could only keep walking around and then he waved his hand. "If you need anything, you can just tell me!"

Even though Minister Lin clearly understood that even with the help from the Spirit Returning Sect and Shi Yutong, Lin Leiyue was not able to make a breakthrough, what could he do about it if the Lin family became bankrupt from this in the end? However, he felt that he shouldn't mention this now and he gave a ferocious look.

"Father....there is no use...."

Lin Leiyue looked down at her dress and sighed.

"You.....sigh....."

Minister Lin pitied his daughter and said, "You do know that Fang Yuan has just become an expert in inner force and he is well known in Qingye City. The Zhou and Zhang families now are taking orders from him....."

Their disengagement was not a secret.

Obviously, it was like a tight slap in the face for the Lin family as Fang Yuan now managed to improve tremendously and become more well known.

Also, this happened when Lin Leiyue was still alive.

If she was dead or she was trapped in one of the gates for too long, Shi Yutong might lose confidence in her and by then, there would be no bright future for the Lin family.

If one managed to reach a very high level but fell from it, in the end, it would be a very big problem.

"Sigh....."

Minister Lin sighed and said, "If we had known this would happen, we should not have even...."

"What was supposed to happen has already happened. You should say no more, Father!"

Minister Lin didn't expect Lin Leiyue's reaction to be this big after he said his sentence.

"Leiyue.....is it that you....."

Minister Lin was surprised and seemed to have thought of something. He then shook his head and left the room silently.

Now, Lin Leiyue was the only person left in the room.

"Fang Yuan.....Fang Yuan....."

From the silence, Fang Yuan could hear a whisper from Lin Leiyue. She then sighed emotionally.

"..."

Fang Yuan unintentionally heard her secret and left after covering the tile back.

With Lin Leiyue's talents, it was indeed strange for her to be stuck at the Pain Gate for so long.

Only now then he realised he was one of the reasons why she had

failed to break through.

"No wonder you came to inquire about me previously...."

Fang Yuan wasn't that narcissistic to a level that he would think Lin Leiyue still had feelings for him. Now, he could make a guess easily. "Was it because of her evil side? I didn't expect that I would affect her that much!"

During training, when one meets his or her evil side, there were only two solutions to this problem.

One could forcefully deal and remove her evil side, or one could.....

Upon thinking about the other solution, Fang Yuan was speechless and had a wonderful feeling about such happenings.

"Could this be her punishment to herself? Then this will be none of my business already..."

With his character, the opponent would not be able to deal with him in any way.

Fang Yuan could conclude that with his tremendous improvement, he would surpass Lin Leiyue and even Shi Yutong. This would also mean that Lin Leiyue would feel guilty of herself for her entire life for not being able to make that breakthrough.

Such punishment was crueller than taking her life away.

.....

Fang Yuan couldn't be bothered with what Lin Leiyue was feeling right now.

From the start, he was already not concerned with her matters and he could easily not be bothered by her. He then continued to search for Elder Han.

'From my acupuncture, he should have just woken up!'

Fang Yuan waited silently and suddenly heard a laughter from

the courtyard below him. He then knew he located Elder Han and sneaked there.

"With my skills now, there will be a chance of me being discovered only when Elder Han fully recovers!"

Fang Yuan bypassed a few whispers and came to a room. He then concentrated his magical energy between his eyebrows and focused it outwards.

He had learnt this trick from the scroll in the Blood Magic Technique. After he executed this trick, he could see clearly what was inside the room. The furniture were placed nicely in the room and there was an old man lying down on the bed. The old man got up fiercely and spat out a mouthful of blood.

"Elder Han!"

A person came in anxiously and Fang Yuan could recognise that the person was Lu Zhisen.

"It is nothing.....I'm okay!"

Elder Han coughed out another mouthful of blood but he then felt better. "I'm hungry. Can I have a bowl of ginseng porridge...."

"Coming up!"

Lu Zhisen replied happily and asked, "You are better now, Elder Han?"

"I have recovered partially. This doctor Fang is indeed powerful. As compared to him, all the doctors back in our sect are useless!"

One could see that Elder Han's resentment for the doctors back in the sect was big. Elder Han then observed his surroundings and asked, "Are we back in the Lin family's mansion?"

"Yes, you have been asleep from the acupuncture till now. The doctor has prescribed you with medicine and reminded you to take a good rest. We will then go back to him after 7 days!"

"Hmm!"

Elder Han acknowledged and swallowed a spoonful of the porridge. He suddenly said, "Guan Feng, keep a lookout outside. I will need to speak to Elder Lu!"

"Yes, Elder Han!"

A voice from the outside acknowledged Elder Han's order and a few of the disciples from the Spirit Returning Sect then came to patrol the surroundings.

As such, to spy on them, one would either have to go head-on with the guards or find a way to sneak in.

Fang Yuan laughed and moved further away from the room. However, with the concentration of his magical energy, he was still able to hear the conversation inside the room clearly.

"With Guan Feng guarding outside, I feel much safer to speak to you...."

Elder Han nodded and his expression suddenly became gloomy. "How is Fang Yuan's.....skills? You have duelled with him before so you should know?"

Lu Zhisen was surprised by Elder Han's question and replied, "He is [Martial Artist (7th Gate)] and has not broken through the 4 Heavenly Gates.....I am ashamed that I couldn't survive through a few of his moves!"

"Hehe.... I see, a [Martial Artist (7th Gate)]. He is well known in Qinghe County but with what I have seen now.....Fang Yuan has not revealed his full power yet....."

Elder Han laughed and imagined a scene which Fang Yuan was charging right at him.

In fact, he had no intention to repel his attacks as he knew that he was injured badly and if Fang Yuan really had intentions to kill him, he would not be able to repel Fang Yuan's attack.

However, Fang Yuan had a secret technique and if he executed it,

his skills would be on par with a [Martial Artist (8th Gate)]! This would be his true power.

"Did you just mention....the Death....the Death Gate? That....is impossible. He is still so young! This is only possible if he had started training while he was in his mother's womb..."

Lu Zhisen's voice was trembling, which clearly showed that he was surprised by Fang Yuan's achievements.

He spoke halfway and realised that according to what the Lin family had learnt, Fang Yuan had only trained martial arts for a year!

"Do you understand my point? Even if the Lin family's intel on Fang Yuan was wrong, he must be extremely talented to achieve such level even if he had started training since young.....If the sect head was not busy, she would have taken this matter into her own hands....."

Elder Han closed his eyes and said, "You have known enough about him for now. I have duelled with him previously and I shall tell you more after I have recovered!"

"Yes, Elder Han!"

Lu Zhisen acknowledged and was worried.

"Haha....you thought I had done something funny to the Xuan Yin Heart Technique?"

Elder Han seemed to have seen through him and laughed. "I will still need his help to recover from my injuries. How could I do such thing and betray him at this point in time? What I gave him was indeed the original one!"

However, Elder Han did not mention that even though the technique he gave was original, through Shi Yutong's authentication, when this technique was trained to a high level, there would be side effects. The side effects include a change in personality and the condition of the body and many more.

Such changes were gradual and would not be discovered if one did not train the technique to a high level.

But if one were to do so, it would be impossible to revert.

'Lin Leiyue is the next successor to the throne of the sect head. Fang Yuan can be persuaded to join their side and in future, it will be sufficient to just reward him. How will he then be able to improve further and become a threat to the new successor?'

'Furthermore.....the presence of Fang Yuan is just a big obstacle to Lin Leiyue. Lin Leiyue still haven't realised that I have been advised by the sect head before about this.....'

'After my recovery, I shall help to solve Lin Leiyue's problems!'

'As for Fang Yuan, I will need to know all his secrets and if I am successful, maybe I can reward him and have him by my side. If I am not.....hehe.....'

...

Under the flame, Lu Zhisen saw Elder Han's dull face darken. He instantly felt a cold stream rush down his spine and he shuddered.

Chapter 72: Love Birds

"Anything can happen, and no one can guess what others are thinking..."

With his robes fluttering, Fang Yuan ran out of the Lin Mansion and heaved a long sigh.

Even though he did not listen to Elder Han's entire plan, but from his tone and attitude, it seemed that the Spirit Returning Sect was guarding against Fang Yuan, and was trying to restrict his movements.

Of course, Fang Yuan had already guessed this. Furthermore, he was already suspicious of Elder Han, and as of now, it seemed like a challenge as to whose plan would be the better one. This was not definitely a bad thing for Fang Yuan.

"The powers of Spirit Returning Sect are now reduced, and coincidentally, Leiyang County is in a mess right now. Shi Yutong should be occupied trying to deal with the situation in Shaoyang City... This is the best opportunity for me!"

Within the entire Spirit Returning Sect, Elder Yan and Elder Han's inner powers were the strongest and both were martial artists of the 4 Heavenly Gates. However, both of them were injured now.

"It seems... Elder Han's recovery would have to be delayed again..."

Fang Yuan mulled, his eyes deep in thought.

On their side was a Wu Zong and a spiritual knight, and it would be unwise to go head to head.

Of course, since Elder Han would still need Fang Yuan to heal him, while he was recovering Fang Yuan would still be safe.

"Half a year... Hehe..."

Fang Yuan shook his head.

With his current progress, who would know how much he could achieve in half a year?

"From how Elder Han looked just now, it seems that there is no problem with the Xuan Yin Heart Technique, but there might be repercussions in the future... Heh Heh... Spirit Returning Sect? Spirit Returning Sect!"

Fang Yuan's eyes narrowed and a mysterious light glowed from them.

...

After returning to the secluded valley, Fang Yuan settled down. His daily routine included training with the Yin Yang Jade, farming in his spiritual farm, drinking the spiritual tea, consuming the spiritual rice, and occasionally would send Zhou Wenwu out to bring back news to keep himself updated of the outside world.

The Flame Jade Rice was re-planted by him many times, and it seemed different from the usual Vermilion Jade Rice, as it required a different method of growing.

"The good thing is that the Flame Jade Rice evolved from the Vermilion Jade Rice. I could follow this lead, and maybe it would be recorded in the book Master left behind..."

In the field of botany, Fang Yuan was undoubtedly the expert.

He slowly placed a few ruby stones around the seedlings, and nourished it with spiritual fertilizer. Fang Yuan took a step back and was relieved as he noticed the Flame Jade Rice grew a little.

"Flower Fox Ferret, you will be in charge of protecting it from now on, do you understand?"

Fang Yuan stroked its head, as though he was instructing him, and gazed into the sky.

As the sun set, the crimson sun rays filled the secluded valley,

making everything appear orange.

"Today is the 6th day. Elder Han will return tomorrow to beg me to heal him..."

Fang Yuan had a cunning look, and suddenly a shriek was heard.

"Chirp! Chirp!"

A strong gust of wind came as the Iron-tailed Black Eagle landed, with its back facing Fang Yuan.

"Good job!"

He chuckled, climbed onto the back of the Iron-tailed Black Eagle, hugged its neck and steadied himself.

"Chirp! Chirp!"

Fang Yuan lifted off together with the Iron-tailed Black Eagle, and as the wind howled against his face, he could not open his eyes.

Once he got used to the wind, he peered open his eyes and realised that he was high above the ground!

In the fluffy white clouds, a black silhouette flashed past. It took aim at a direction and flew towards it like an arrow shot at a target board!

"This is... The feeling of flight?"

Fang Yuan looked down, and through the thin clouds, he could see the entire Qingye City, as though it was a sandcastle, and the people were like ants.

From a different angle, the feeling was entirely different.

This view made him feel like he was a God!

"One day... I will become like this! I must reach this level!"

Fang Yuan tighten his grip and was determined.

The Iron-tailed Black Eagle was quick. In a few moments, it had

already flown past Qingye City.

"Chirp! Chirp!"

As the sun fully set, the moon rose and a large black shadow landed just outside a city.

Fang Yuan looked at the large city and felt that it was a pity. "Oh, Qinghe County... The previous time I took so much effort just to come here, but this time it was effortless to reach here on the back of the Iron-tailed Black Eagle. Uncomparable!"

That's right. Qinghe County, or rather, the headquarters of Spirit Returning Sect, was his target!

Fang Yuan wasn't a person who would not retaliate. Since the Spirit Returning Sect had plotted against him, he wouldn't mind creating trouble and confusion for the sect.

And in his plan, the Iron-tailed Black Eagle played a big part.

"If we succeed, we can return to the secluded valley tomorrow to prove that we were not here... If my prediction is incorrect and if Shi Yutong did set up ambushes around the Sect, I can still escape with the Iron-tailed Black Eagle!"

Fang Yuan stroked its feathers and fed it a bamboo fruit. "Wait here, and hear out for my signal!"

"Chirp! Chirp!"

The black eagle nodded its head and assured Fang Yuan.

'I have finally tamed this beast!'

The truth was that only this time after breaking through the Yin Gate and defeating the Iron-tailed Black Eagle would the eagle allow him to ride him and fly with him!

Before that, the black eagle was still proud of itself and did not really allowed Fang Yuan to touch it.

If not for that, Fang Yuan would have brought it along for his

previous journey to Lieyang County.

"It really boils down to fate and skill to tame a spiritual beast!"

He knew that luck played a part too for him to tame this black eagle.

Firstly, he was lucky to have the Flower Fox Ferret to allow him to communicate with the black eagle. Otherwise, both of them could never have communicated.

Afterwards, he was lucky to have the bamboo fruit, which was exactly what the black eagle wanted.

Furthermore, with these two factors, the black eagle would still not listen to him, until he proved his worth by overpowering both spiritual beasts.

All these factors had to exist before this was possible.

Seeing how the Sect controlled the county, and even if Shi Yutong was powerful, no one knew if she did tame any spiritual beast on her own.

...

The Spirit Returning Sect was a big sect, and with its headquarters here it could rule over Qinghe County.

Fang Yuan changed to a darker clothing, wore a mask, hid from the disciples on patrol and entered the sect.

He was now a martial artist of the 4 Heavenly Gates and could have his own way in Qinghe County. How would the disciples be of any match against him?

Furthermore, even if he was discovered, any Elder who came would also be no match for him.

"Ghosts..."

Fang Yuan was like a headless housefly, and even almost triggered a few traps. He realised the biggest enemy in the entire

headquarters was the complicated arrangement of the interior.

"Is it better for me to fight my way in, or would it be better to burn this entire place down?"

Fang Yuan did not want to resign to fate. "If this is so, I will only hurt the surface, there won't be any pain!"

The entire Sect was huge, and based on his strength alone, even if he was a martial artist of 4 Heavenly Gates, he could only do so much damage, unless his life was in danger!

"I'll grab the tongue first!"

He took a few steps forward, entered a large courtyard; it was like a small garden.

The night was peaceful and a few fireflies danced around.

"Eh?"

Fang Yuan exerted his magical energy like a web, and suddenly, his expression changed and he smiled, as he approached a corner.

"Brother Tian!"

A woman's voice was heard. "I've missed you!"

"Sister Ling, it was the same for me... The sect's rules were strict, how would I dare to enter your bedroom? Luckily, the Sect is undergoing a big change now with a lack of manpower, so they chose me as the law enforcer. This was why I had the chance to visit you..."

A deep voice was heard, and it was a familiar one. "Sister Ling, I've missed you so dearly... One day of not seeing you felt like 3 seasons..."

"Ew..."

Fang Yuan felt like vomiting as he heard it, and jumped out. "Ha! Who would've known that I would encounter two lovebirds here!"

"Who's this?"

The couple who were sitting in the pavilion were shocked. The male disciple, without thinking, struck his palm out at Fang Yuan.

"For someone who has yet to attain inner force, you dare to challenge me?"

Fang Yuan tried to cover himself up. He had his voice deeper, and with a flick of his finger, a few stones with the strength of inner force flew towards the disciple. As he was struck, he spat out blood and fell to the ground, bringing the female disciple with him.

"Who are you exactly?"

The male disciple looked at the man in black with shock.

He was after all a [Martial Artist (5th Gate)], and was one of the leading ones among his fellow disciples, and yet he was so easily defeated over here. His opponent was indeed strong, and even his master might not be able to match up to...

"Alright... Both of you. Do you want to live or die?"

Fang Yuan tried to drag time.

After all, since this person was the law enforcer, he could take advantage of him and aid Fang Yuan in his mission. This place was a dead corner and it would take a while before anyone would come by here.

"Live!"

These two disciples were not hard to deal with, and after witnessing Fang Yuan's skill, they had no other choice.

"Alright, I have a few things to ask. If you can answer me truthfully, I will leave and will not harm you two. Otherwise... Hehe..."

Fang Yuan looked at the female disciple. She was wearing a pink dress, and her skin was white as snow. She had a small mole at the corner of her mouth and was rather pretty.

"Let Sister Ling go, and just take me!"

The young man exclaimed.

"Hm... I shall ask now. Your foundation seems good, so you should have gotten the true teachings of the Sect, and practised the Spirit Returning Heart Manual, right?"

Fang Yuan's eyes glittered.

"You want to secretly learn our Sect's inner power technique?"

The young man was shocked, but at that moment, Fang Yuan struck Sister Ling and made her faint. He smiled and said, "After you have answered me, I will awaken her, and ask her the same question, and if there is any difference, hehe..."

At that moment, the young man broke into cold sweat.

Chapter 73: Arson

A dark cloud rolled across the sky and covered the light from the moon.

Under the hazy starlight, a small lake could be seen. The water in the lake took on a dark colour in the nighttime. In the centre of the lake was a tower surrounded by water. The only way to reach that tower was via a wooden bridge that was connected to the bank of the lake.

"The Martial Arts Court of the Spirit Returning Sect?"

Fang Yuan had yearned to be here for a very long time. However, it was heavily guarded. Even though they had previously agreed to let him peruse the manuals, they had only opened up the most common collection for him.

"This place is surrounded by water...It is obvious that they are afraid of a fire that might destroy the treasures found in this place..."

"It appears as if the pair of wild mandarin ducks did not lie to me, this is a crucial location for the Spirit Returning Sect..."

Fang Yuan smirked.

The Martial Arts Court were heavily-guarded with countless of traps. Disarming the traps would waste too much time.

As his opponents were most afraid of a fire breaking out, he would achieve the intended effect by setting the place on fire.

...

"Crackle Crackle!"

Not long after, a small fire was formed outside the martial art court and started to grow. Soon, the raging flames started to engulf the whole court.

"Hmmm? A fire? Hurry, sound the alarm and get the buckets!"

"Crack!"

The window shattered and a person bolted out. He bellowed and directed to a few disciples who were guarding the martial arts court to extinguish the fire.

"Understood!"

The few disciples replied as they scrambled for the buckets. The person looked at the growing fire, his face displaying anxiety, "Damn... smoke and fire are prohibited in this place, which of these disciples were careless?"

No one had dared to attack the property of the Spirit Returning Sect first. As such, they were not vigilant.

"It is lucky that the fire is not too big and only a few walls are burnt. The situation is under control!"

In a moment of anxiety, the person pushed away a few disciples in front of him and arrived at the side of the lake. "Move!"

He was surprisingly strong. With a flick of his wrist, a long and black whip appeared. It was like a snake and wove around the buckets, linking the buckets together and submerged them into the lake.

"Swish!"

Using the whip, he lifted the buckets into the air and emptied the content onto the fire. The fire became smaller. "

"The elder is amazing!"

"His skills with the whip is of another world!"

A few disciples gazed in awe and loudly praised him.

"Hmph!"

The elder flicked the whip once again, causing the buckets to submerge in the lake. He gathered his energy to put out the fire.

At this moment, the surface of the lake burst open, revealing a

shadow which leaps forward!

"Hmmm?"

The elder was shocked. He did not expect to face an ambush below the surface of the lake!

At this moment, the whip was still connected to the bucket and he was unable to use it. He could only loosen his grip on the whip and with both palms pushing forward, generated a wall of energy with a resounding crash! He was a Martial Artist (7th Gate) and highly-skilled in inner power!

While not many had heard of him, he was the guardian of the Martial Arts Court and practised his skills daily. Although he only knew a few techniques, he was cast in a new light.

"Ha!"

The shadow in front of him did not dodge and instead struck out with his palm, his palm appeared to be slightly caved in and had a black sheen to it.

"Bang!"

As their palms clashed, the guardian felt an incredibly strong inner power that chilled him to his bones. He could feel his inner power diminishing as realization dawn upon him, "You are...!"

He was wounded as his inner power was countered. His face turned black as he was struck by the poison of the Pearl Tail Snake.

"Bang bang!"

The shadow continuously struck the guardian and left a palm print on the guardian's head.

"Boom!"

The guardian toppled over with no pulse and breath!

In a matter of seconds, this trump card of the Spirit Returning Sect, one of the martial artist who had broken through the Death

Gate, lost his life!

The disciples shrieked before tossing aside their pails and ran away.

Other than running away, they had no other options. This was no longer about fighting to survive.

"Splash! Splash!"

The wooden bridge was too narrow. In their attempt to escape, they shoved each other. Some of them even jumped in the lake and swam for the shore.

"Bong! Bong!"

The sound of the gong broke the crisp silence.

"Someone had invaded the sect and set the Martial Arts Court on fire!"

"Hurry! Notify all the elders and the protectors!"

"Guard the place and do not panic!"

...

As the Martial Arts Courts were being engulfed by the fire, the whole Spirit Returning Sect was moving and acting fast.

A group of disciples, under the leadership of Lady Yan had already surrounded the lake.

Lady Yan had an electrifying gaze. She waved her walking stick and charged into the lake. She was highly skilled in the Lightness Skill and could even tread water!

"Who dares to insult my Spirit Returning Sect?!"

She looked at the Martial Arts Court that was engulfed by the flames with a pained look. She fixed her eyes on Fang Yuan and glared at him, "Scoundrel!"

"Whoosh!"

She waved her walking stick and rushed towards Fang Yuan.

At the banks, many elders and deacons were headed for the centre of the lake.

"Haha..."

Fang Yuan laughed before turning around to run, "Old woman, I can't believe you are not dead!"

He kicked in the direction of the old lady.

"Crack!!!"

The wooden boards were lifted off the ground and caught fire. They were sent hurtling towards the old lady.

"Come if you dare!"

Fang Yuan laughed and ran.

"Get out of the way!"

As Fang Yuan was escaping, his palms turned black.

At his current level, the Black Sand Palm was lethal. An ordinary elder who had broken through the 6th or 7th Gate would be heavily wounded if he was struck by the technique. Even the wind generated from it was laced with poison which caused the surrounding low-skilled disciples to collapse onto the floor.

He had already gone easy on them and had only used the technique at a level that was comparable to that of a martial artist that had broken through the 8th Gate. The results would be even more devastating if he had not held back.

"Whoosh!"

Fang Yuan did not engage in any battle and instead headed towards the outer boundaries.

"Cough cough... I will never let you escape!"

Even though the Lady Yan had already broken through the Earth Gate (11th Gate), she was heavily wounded and could only fight at a

skill level that was comparable to that of a martial artist (9th Gate). Seeing Fang Yuan as such, she became enraged.

The scoundrel would not be so presumptuous if Shi Yutong was present!

"We had been too careless. To think that people would not dare to come here and cause trouble given the Sect's reputation!"

Lady Yan silently cursed herself. Her hatred for Fang Yuan increased.

"Black Sand Palm? The power of the 8th Gate? Do you really think that no one in the Sect could stand up to you?"

Lady Yan let out a cry as she saw that Fang Yuan was escaping. How could she let him go? She leapt forward and with a shriek that resounded in the place, said: "Elder of the Southern Palace, Elder Di, follow me!"

"Roger!"

These two elders were the closest to breaking through the Death Gate amongst the elders protecting the place. With the aid of these two elders, Lady Yan was confident of taking down Fang Yuan despite not being able to utilize her full strength!

"Haha....Old lady, come if you dare!"

Fang Yuan taunted. They chased relentlessly and in no time, arrived outside the county.

"Tsk tsks...No wonder you are from such a big sect. Wasn't that the Lightness Skill?"

Fang Yuan wanted to go easy on them and allow them to catch up. However, he soon realized that no matter how fast he ran, the distance between them kept shrinking.

Under the moonlight, Lady Yan and the two elders appeared to be gliding gracefully through the grass and at the same time, fast as lightning.

"Scoundrel, where are you running to?"

Lady Yan glided forward. With a wave of her left hand, the Lion Head walking stick flew towards Fang Yuan's back.

"Hmph!"

Fang Yuan slipped and missed a few steps.

"Crack!"

Lady Yan smiled and her arms suddenly extended.

"Back Piercing Hand!"

"Roar!"

The lion head opened its mouth and spat out a ring of fire towards Fang Yuan's back.

"Boom!"

The ring of fire exploded mid-air and charred the ground.

"Whoosh!"

The two elders at the back stopped. "Lady Yan's Lion Head walking stick is indeed impressive!"

"Careful!"

Lady Yan grasped her stick, her face red. She coughed violently before saying, "The man is not dead yet!"

"What?"

The two elders were shocked. They suddenly felt a gust of strong wind.

"Caw!"

The aura of an eagle hunting its prey could be felt amidst the strong gust of wind. The Iron-tailed Black Eagle flew towards them, the claws outstretched.

Bang!

At this moment, the ground cracked open and Fang Yuan emerged from the crack. His hands were formed into the claws. He did not hold back the inner power of the 9th Gate.

He could not be bothered anymore and struck with all his might!

The two elders let out a gasp. They managed to fend off the attack of the Iron-tailed Black Eagle but Fang Yuan's eagle claw managed to get past their defense and grabbed their throat. They could only let out a small sound.

"Lady Yan, you are next!"

Fang Yuan turned and spoke calmly.

"A martial artist who is of the level of the 4 Heavenly Gate...Eagle Claw Iron Skin Technique...and this beast?"

Lady Yan coughed, her eyes confused, "Who are you?"

"Who I am is of no importance. What is important is that I hope you would be able to last longer!"

Fang Yuan gazed coldly.

Lady Yan was an expert who had broken through the Earth Gate. Her technique that she used previously was impressive. If Fang Yuan had not seen the technique, he would have been at a severe disadvantage.

He had no intention of killing his opponent.

After all, such a good test subject was hard to come by!

Chapter 74: Concealment

It was dawn.

Elder Han and Lu Zhisen came to the secluded valley and saw Doctor Fang who was dressed in white robes.

"How are you feeling, Elder Han?"

Fang Yuan asked gently, his actions were calm like the spring breeze; no one could associate him with the murderer and arsonist in the Spirit Returning Sect the night before.

"Fortunate to have been healed by Doctor Fang, I am recovering well!"

Elder Han smiled, and the precautionary attitude he had before was gone.

Fang Yuan had other thoughts of his own. If Elder Han knew that he was the one behind all that happened in the Spirit Returning Sect the night before, he wasn't sure if he would be as calm as he was right now.

Of course, he did not know what happened and had to act like it.

After all, even a Wu Zong martial artist would not be able to traverse from Qingye City to the Spirit Returning Sect and back in a night, not to mention accomplish so many things-unless he had a flying spiritual beast.

"The previous time I have undergone the Golden Needle Acupoint Piercing, I slept until midnight and was a little worried..."

As Elder Han mentioned it, he took notice of Fang Yuan's expression.

"Keke..."

What kind of person was Fang Yuan? He did not twitch a muscle, and explained, "This was because your injury was too serious, and I

would require the body to enter a deep sleep for it to slowly recover. It is akin to learning martial arts the slow way, the same idea... I believe Elder Han knows this better than me!"

"That's right!"

Elder Han froze, then slowly nodded his head.

He did not like the experience of fainting and letting someone else have full control over his body.

However, if he wanted to recover, he had to listen to this doctor and did not have another choice.

"Mm, I'll leave it in your hands, Doctor!"

He gulped his medicinal soup, stripped and laid on the bed.

"Mm!"

Fang Yuan took out his golden needle, pierced several acupoints in quick succession, and Elder Han subconsciously fell into deep sleep.

"I hate distractions while I am doing my thing..."

Fang Yuan said, without even turning his head.

"Ah... I'm sorry! I will leave now!"

Lu Zhisen scratched his head, chuckled and left the room.

Even though this was not an instruction from Elder Han, he had no other choice but to do so as Fang Yuan had requested for it.

....

In the room, Fang Yuan waved his needle around. He was not attempting to heal Elder Han, but rather, to seal and experiment on him.

'A martial artist of the 4 Heavenly Gates has a very different circulatory system, especially its ability to fuse and form a miniature elemental force in a Martial Artist (11th Gate)...'

Fang Yuan placed his right palm on Elder Han's abdomen, focused his magical energy through his Mind Palace and reached into the depths of his elemental energy.

'Even though it is just a miniature elemental energy, it is still the fusion of Yin and Yang. Its strength comes from the Earth and Heavens and should not be belittled. Be it yesterday's Lady Yan, or today's Elder Han, if not for their serious injuries, I would be no match for them...'

After testing it out, he had a deeper understanding of elemental energy.

'Elder Han's seeds of his elemental force seems to be a little weaker than that of Lady Yan's, but it's just nice for me...'

After a few rounds of experimenting, Fang Yuan stopped, looked at the helpless Elder Han, and his thought ran wild. 'Both Elder Yan and Elder Han are dealt with. Could they call the Heavenly Gods to help them? I'm not sure if that's enough, why not add in a Shi Yutong...'

Just last night, he lured Lady Yan out of the city, and with the help of the Iron-tailed Black Eagle, attacked her. It was a big loss for the Sect, and even Lady Yan was captured.

She was a highly skilled martial artist within the Earth Gate, and what Fang Yuan wanted to study was her own miniature elemental force in her diaphragm, which was why he spared her life. However, to her, this would not be a good thing.

'Hmm... 2 test subjects, so now I can compare them. I would run some small tests and keep a daily log for Elder Han, and as for Lady Yan, I would do the more destructive research on her, that's right!'

Fang Yuan was pleased, and in his eyes, Elder Han was merely a lab rat.

...

The sun rose.

Unknowingly, a day has passed.

Lu Zhisen was flustered. "Why did he take so long? It wasn't this long the previous time..."

He looked at the secluded valley and could tell that there was something secretive about it. Looking at the Straw Pavilion, he did not dare to take a step forward, and his mind started to run wild. "If anything happens to Elder Han, what would I do?"

Anxious, he became increasingly nervous.

Just as he was about to break the rule and enter the hut, the door opened and Fang Yuan appeared.

"What are you trying to do?"

He realised that Lu Zhisen had the posture as though he was about to charge in, and casually asked.

"Haha... Haha... Nothing much! I just wanted to check on your progress, and checking if you require any of my assistance..."

Lu Zhisen scratched his head and looked earnest.

"It's fine. Bring him back, and return in half a month's time!"

Fang Yuan waved, stood at the side and revealed a pathway.

"Half a month? Didn't you say 7 days the previous time?"

Lu Zhisen enquired.

"What is it? Any objections?"

Fang Yuan stared at him.

Facing the doctor, Lu Zhisen was embarrassed. He was no match for Fang Yuan and could only silently carry Elder Han away, as though he was escaping.

'Seeing his expression, it seems that he is worried that I might harm Elder Han... In fact, he guessed it....'

Fang Yuan witnessed them leaving, touched his chin and smiled.

After they returned, they would get the news of the chaos in Spirit Returning Sect, and would no longer have the effort to guard against him anymore.

...

"Iron-tailed Black Eagle, let's go!"

Back to the secluded valley, Fang Yuan rode the black eagle to a mountain cave.

As someone who had foresight, he had done preparations.

This mountain cave was halfway to the peak of the mountain and was Master Wenxin's temporary abode when he came here to pluck mountain herbs. There was even a water vat and a few dry rations. The location was very good and the cave was rather hidden.

Once Fang Yuan become influential enough, he would tidy this place up as his second base.

And as for the Iron-tailed Black Eagle, it originally had to travel long distances to reach the secluded valley, but now, the journey was just the bat of an eyelid.

"Chirp! Chirp!"

Accompanying the bird's chirping, the Iron-tailed Black Eagle landed on the ground, and Fang Yuan leapt onto it.

Removing the vegetation cover, a mountain cave was revealed. It was formed naturally and seemed like the nest of a wild animal; something was different as he approached the cave.

The ground was flat and dry; there was no moss or weeds growing on the rocks. It was barren and was even a little reflective.

Fang Yuan lit a fire torch, appeared emotionless and walked to the end of the cave; a scene appeared.

On the ground was a layer of dried grass, and surrounding it a large water vat, a few dry rations hidden under a few rocks, as though one was afraid that other animals might eat it. The entire

place seemed worn-down, but to a person trapped in the mountains, hungry and thirsty, this was not a bad survival shelter.

"Lady Yan! What do you find of this place? Oh... I have forgotten that you are still asleep..."

At the end of the cave, there was a little crack and it was pitch-dark. One could squeeze through the crack, walk a few steps forward and arrive at a large hole in the floor.

On an emerald rock, Lady Yan's silhouette appeared, albeit drowsy and pale; it was obvious that she was ill.

Fang Yuan took out a pill, forced it down her, and took out his golden needle to perform acupoint piercing on her forehead.

"Wu..."

After a short while, Lady Yan sighed and opened her eyes.

"You are... The big thief just now?!"

She sounded shocked as she saw Fang Yuan.

After all, no one could associate the evil and strong 4 Heavenly Gate martial artist last night to the young man in front of her.

"Indeed, it is me!"

Fang Yuan nodded his head and did not deny it. He immediately noticed Lady Yan's look of despair.

"Mm, you are quite smart. You know that once I've shown you my face I will not allow you to leave this place..."

"A pity... Looking at the state you are in, it would be hard for you not to die!"

In order to hold this Earth Gate martial artist in captivity, Fang Yuan spent a lot of effort. He first sealed her inner force, and dislocated all her joints, in case she used her underhand means to escape. In this way, even if she was Wu Zong it would be hard for her to escape.

"Good move! Good move!"

Lady Yan was extremely experienced in the martial arts world and could guess her own predicament. "What feud does my Sect have with you? To deserve such treatment?"

"Revenge?"

Fang Yuan touched his chin. "There might be a feud. My name is Fang Yuan, does it ring a bell?"

"Fang Yuan? Fang Yuan!!!"

Lady Yan was suspicious of him and glared into his eyes. "It's you! How is this possible?"

She knew of Lin Leiyue's incident and was also aware that the young man from Qingye City was rather capable as he could subdue Song Zhong.

However, Song Zhong was only a Martial Artist (7th Gate)!

And Fang Yuan now? Obviously a martial artist of the 4 Heavenly Gates! And the large spiritual eagle too! Against both of them, even with the help of the 2 other Elders, they could put up a fight.

Lady Yan felt that even if she recovered and teamed up with the other 2 Elders, they would still be no match to Fang Yuan and his eagle!

He seemed younger than 20 years old?

With his potential, he wasn't just gifted anymore; he was a mutant!

"Master Fang... Regarding what happened that day, I don't want to mention it anymore. I only want to know if there is any chance of you reconciling with the Spirit Returning Sect."

Lady Yan struggled to talk, and her words were filled with hope.

Being at odds against a talented martial artist of limitless potential, she could see the downfall of the Spirit Returning Sect

and therefore attempted to reconcile them, regardless of what conditions she might have to accept.

"No hope!"

Fang Yuan shook his head. "I guess you don't know the entire story?"

At this point, Lady Yan lost all hope.....

Chapter 75: Breakthrough

"Elemental force is the force of heaven and earth. When one activates his elemental force, he will be able to start afresh. This is the essence of strength and it changes unpredictably. It also acts as a solid foundation to build up to higher levels....."

Through his thorough research, Fang Yuan realised that the combination of Yin and Yang could produce the 'Miniature Elemental Force', which was unbelievably powerful.

Such a discovery shocked and overwhelmed him.

Furthermore, the 'Miniature Elemental Force' was able to surprise him even though it was way inferior as compared to the real elemental force.

"With my current foundations, it is impossible for me to master Wu Zong with my elemental force!"

"But it is possible for me to combine the Yin and Yang to form the Miniature Elemental Force to make a breakthrough!"

Back in the secluded valley.

Fang Yuan sat on a green rock while carrying the Yin Yang Jade and he appeared relaxed.

"Ha!"

His 9th Gate Yin's inner force kept flowing out like a river and flowed into the Yin Yang Jade. A clear sound was heard.

"Kacha!"

The Yin Yang Jade shook and its inner part vibrated from the shock. The shock was subsequently absorbed.

With such a great infusion of Yin, the balance was tipped and caused the swirling in the Yin Yang Jade to be destroyed.

"Now.....explode!"

Fang Yuan opened his eyes widely.

"Kacha! Kacha!"

The swirl which combined both Yin and Yang suddenly exploded and the Yang kept expanding and compressing. Gradually, a new type of energy was formed.

The Yin Yang Jade was unique and tough, and Fang Yuan wanted to make use of these two advantages to compress the combined Yin and Yang into a single entity!

With the strong fusion from his inner force, the exploded swirl was compressed into a small dot. The dot solidified.

"Ha! Liquify the combination of Yin and Yang!"

Under the force of fusion by Fang Yuan, cracks formed on the surface of the Yin Yang Jade and the cracks were spreading throughout the entire piece like a spider web.

"Whiz!"

A constant swirling noise was heard from the Yin Yang Jade.

'Fortunately, I was using the Yin Yang Jade. If I was using my Dantian, it could have already been exploded.'

Yin Yang Jade was unique and could accommodate both Yin and Yang. It was the best choice to use it to fuse both Yin and Yang into one.

If he were to perform the compression in his Dantian, he would have to worry about the consequences.

Of course, even if he used the Yin Yang Jade and failed, he would still be injured, but his injuries would be minimal.

"Hoo! Hoo!"

He concentrated his magical energy into the Yin Yang Jade and observed the movements made by both Yin and Yang.

With the concentration, the Yin and Yang inside the jade were

quickly fused and it became more solidified than before. It gave out a red and black colour and there seemed to be a slight disturbance in it.

"Kacha!"

After a while, a crisp sound was heard.

Even though it sounded soft, Fang Yuan thought it sounded as if a silver bottle was broke through by a liquid.

"Bang!"

Inside the Yin Yang Jade, a big amount of Yin and Yang was compressed into a dot. Finally, after a huge amount of compression, the dot started to fuse.

A new form of energy which was green in colour was formed through the magical energy. The energy looked as if it was in a liquid form and was strong. It managed to absorb both Yin and Yang into one form and Fang Yuan' inner force could feel some resistance from this new form of energy.

"Good!"

He opened his eyes widely and his inner force from his diaphragm went into the jade and fused constantly.

This Miniature Elemental Force was formed from his combination of Yin and Yang. Currently, the Miniature Elemental Force also absorbed a huge amount of his inner force. At the start, there was some resistance. As time passed, the level of resistance lowered.

Fang Yuan's expression was very serious. He used a bit of his inner force and allowed the Miniature Elemental Force to be transferred from the Yin Yang Jade to his arms.

"Woo!"

He frowned as he felt as if his tendons had been cut.

"The force is indeed powerful.....If my condition of the body was

not as strong and my tendons were not as tough, I would be feeling more than just pain now."

Fang Yuan thought about this silently.

This was perfectly normal as compared to the inner force from the 9th gate, the current Miniature Elemental Force gave a different feeling!

Such situation was similar to when a small river meets the ocean and become overwhelmed by the ocean.

Of course, Fang Yuan had already expected this to happen. Since he was able to hold on further still, he immediately used this new form of energy to fuse the remaining.

.....

A period of time passed.

A white shadow appeared and it was the Flower Fox Ferret. It was shocked when it saw Fang Yuan.

After all, Fang Yuan's condition did not look well from the outside.

There was white smoke coming out from his head and his skin colour became blood red.

"Kacha! Kacha!"

As the Flower Fox Ferret grew more worried, two clear sounds came from Fang Yuan.

He opened his eyes and became composed.

"I have completed!"

Fang Yuan was satisfied as he could feel a constant flow of inner force around his body.

"Bang!"

At that moment, the Yin Yang Jade which he was carrying in his hands became into a pile of white ash.

Fang Yuan remained silent upon seeing this.

This unique treasure was not able to endure his doings and became a pile of ash.

"Even though this jade did not have Yin and Yang, it was still a unique treasure....To other sects, this treasure would probably mean nothing to them as they didn't know about this trick, but it was not worth for the jade to..."

After all, one could use the Yin Yang Jade to make tremendous progress but it would still not be as fast as Fang Yuan's. Plus, the jade would not be destroyed when used in training.

Perhaps there could another chance in the near future to use it again for such purpose.

Even though he was reckless, he managed to exchange this piece of jade for progression. From the sect's perspective, this exchange would not be worth it, but to Fang Yuan, it was.

Fang Yuan clapped his hands and went to a peony tree while ignoring the Flower Fox Ferret's stare.

His eyes focused and he transferred his inner force to his fingers and then to a nearby plant.

"Whiz!"

There was a light sound in the air as the peony tree trembled a little. Its leaves gradually fell.

In actual fact, Fang Yuan's fingers were still a distance away from the peony tree.

"Wu Zong allows one to release his elemental force to the surroundings and it is magical! I have not achieved Wu Zong yet but with the Miniature Elemental Force, I am able to achieve a slight part of the skill....."

Next, Fang Yuan's limbs moved without his control and he shook his head. "I have gained too much energy and my physical and

mental body have not gotten used to it...."

He looked at his stats window:

"Name: Fang Yuan

Essence: 8.0

Spirit: 7.9

Magic: 4.0

Age: 19

Cultivation: [Martial Artist (11th Gate)]

Technique: [Black Sand Palm (Grade 5), [Eagle Claw Iron Skin Technique (Grade 11)]

Skill: [Medicine (Level 3)], [Botany (Level 3)]"

"[Eagle Claw Iron Skin Technique (Grade 11)]; At this stage, one will be difficult to be dealt with as one will not be injured easily with the concentration of one's elemental force!"

"Energy.....This amount of energy is strong enough!"

Fang Yuan clenched his fists and could feel the immense power inside his body. He could not wait to find another expert to duel with.

If both Elder Yan and Elder Han attacked him together now, he would not be afraid.

In the entire Spirit Returning Sect, he only feared Shi Yutong.

"What would be the outcome if I fight against a Wu Zong now?"

Fang Yuan closed his eyes and recalled the day when he saw the duel between Wu Zong and the spiritual knight. There was a fast transfer of magical energy and when Fang Yuan recalled this scene, he shook his head.

"Not yet! I would probably end up escaping if I were to fight against them now. Of course..... if I considered the spiritual beasts

I have and geographical location in my favour, I would still have the possibility of escaping!"

He must survive in order to be able to make his next move. Fang Yuan clearly knew this logic.

He was relieved at the result.

His skills had reached such a high level and he would have the ability to defend himself. Even if all the spiritual objects in the secluded valley had been discovered, he was confident in continuing what he used to do.

...

After the breakthrough, Fang Yuan was in a good mood and he went for a shower happily. He then changed into a new set of clothes and was about to make some tea when a noise came from outside.

"This is Zhou Wenwu, I am here to see Master Fang Yuan!"

Zhou Wenwu sounded shocked but Fang Yuan did not show any concern for it.

Ever since the Spirit Returning Sect was raided by a mysterious person, the Martial Arts Court had been burnt and the sect lost a few elders during the battle. Lady Yan was also missing and no one knew whether she was dead or alive. Qinghe County was in a chaos after the news of the Spirit Returning Sect being raided started to spread.

The most mainstream way of looking at things was that the raid was done by an expert from the Five Ghosts Sect as a form of seeking revenge.

Nobody linked the raid to Fang Yuan, who was living in the secluded valley and had been taking care of Elder Han's illness.

Everybody was panicking and Zhou Wenwu came to ask for help constantly. It was obvious that he was seeking for protection and

to prove his loyalty for Fang Yuan, he would expose all kinds of secrets of the Spirit Returning Sect.

For example, Fang Yuan knew that ever since the raid, the Spirit Returning Sect recalled all the elders and disciples from all their controlled territories and was willing to give up some of the territories, hoping that the sect would get away from such incidents in future.

Lu Zhisen, who was in Qingye City, was ordered to return to the sect as soon as possible.

However, Elder Han chose to stay behind and no one knew the actual reason why he chose to stay behind. He claimed that he was seriously injured and with his current injuries, he would be useless anyway if he were to return to the sect to help. Fang Yuan guessed that this old man was probably too afraid to die now and would only go out for battle when he had fully recovered.

He was happy now and without the contributions of the two elders, he would not have been able to improve that fast.

Chapter 76: Extinction

Zhou Wenwu was worried and came to ask for support. Fang Yuan consoled him with a few sentences and sent him back.

After all, Fang Yuan was quite busy at that moment. Where would he have the free time to attend to Zhou Wenwu's needs?

Back in the Green Peak.

The peak of the mountain could be seen vaguely in the cloud of fog. There was grass grown there and there was a Red-eyed White Bird flying around.

"Finally I'm here!"

Fang Yuan was wearing tight clothing. The Flower Fox Ferret and the Iron-tailed Black Eagle followed behind closely and they were all tensed up.

Even since he reached this place, Fang Yuan had been eyeing this piece of spiritual land for quite a while. However, there were huge Red-eyed White Birds guarding this piece of land and his plans on the further development of this land were all useless.

Currently, the numbers of the Red-eyed White Birds had decreased by a lot and Fang Yuan was now a [Martial Artist (11th Gate)]. He was capable to remove the Red-eyed White Birds!

"I am quite familiar with the movements and the activities of the Red-eyed White Birds already....."

Fang Yuan hid in the cloud of fog and focused on observing any movements on the cliff.

"The Red-eyed White King Bird should be back from its hunting now...."

"Chirp! Chirp!"

After a few hours, a sound made by the Red-eyed White King Bird was heard through the strong wind.

Fang Yuan had seen the Red-eyed White King Bird flying through the cloud of fog many times. Its giant wings spread through the cloud of fog and its claws were holding onto a giant python. It then landed smoothly on a platform.

"What a great opportunity for me!"

At that moment, Fang Yuan's eyes glittered.

The Red-eyed White King Bird was able to fly and could escape from Fang Yuan easily even though Fang Yuan was powerful enough to defeat it.

After all, even with the Iron-tailed Black Eagle's help, it was hard to say whether he could defeat the Red-eyed White King Bird in mid-air.

"I will go to the entrance of the hole to trap the Red-eyed White King Bird later. You both will deal with the rest of the Red-eyed White Birds outside. Understand?"

Fang Yuan gave instructions to both the Flower Fox Ferret and the Iron-tailed Black Eagle.

Both spiritual beasts had become smarter as they had been drinking the spiritual tea for quite some time. Both of them nodded to acknowledge the instructions given by Fang Yuan.

"Very well!"

Fang Yuan did not hesitate and went to the peak right away.

"Hoo! Hoo!"

At the top of the cliff, one would be mesmerised by the beautiful scenery of the Green Peak. The cloud of fog surrounded the cliff and the place suddenly felt a little smaller.

"Her!"

Fang Yuan breathed in hard and jumped out from a bush. He then jumped down from the cliff and landed firmly on a platform.

"Chirp! Chirp!"

Many of the Red-eyed White Birds started to make noises and came attacking with a few other spiritual beasts leading the group.

"Get.....out of my way!"

Fang Yuan exhaled a long breath and shouted loudly. Many white feathers fell to the ground and many Red-eyed White Birds became unconscious.

If Gui Wusheng was here and had witnessed that his Paralysing Scream was able to produce such effect, he would be very surprised.

"Chirp!!!"

On the platform of the entrance of the hole, a big silhouette appeared and it was actually the Red-eyed White King Bird. It glared at Fang Yuan and its eyes were filled with anger.

The Red-eyed White King Bird still remembered Fang Yuan for stealing its spiritual objects!

Not only did Fang Yuan come here to steal on a regular basis, he was also killing its own species.

As the leader of the Red-eyed White Birds and a spiritual beast, the Red-eyed White King Bird was very concerned about the survival of its species.

It would be much more hostile towards its enemy!

It then let out a strange noise and did not hesitate to pounce on Fang Yuan.

"Haha....we meet again. I shall send you back!"

Seeing that the Red-eyed White King Bird was charging right towards him, Fang Yuan was slightly eager to fight against it. His Iron Skin Technique was at its peak and his right palm became black and hard like iron. He then went forward and grabbed forcefully.

"Bang!"

There was a loud noise and the platform shook. A few pieces of small rocks then fell from the walls of the hole.

The Red-eyed White King Bird then flew back to the hole quickly as it lost the battle.

It did not expect a human would be that powerful. On normal occasions, humans ran away once they see it!

"That was not satisfying enough for me, fight again!"

Fang Yuan shouted as he stepped into the hole.

Even though a spiritual beast can become stronger on its own without any training, the time needed for that to happen was at least 10 years and sometimes a few hundred years!

However, humans could train on their own and become stronger also.

As heaven's movement was ever vigorous, so must a gentleman ceaselessly strive along. That was the beauty of the training!

"Chirp! Chirp!"

The Red-eyed White King Bird rolled and got up. It shook its feathers and a few pieces of rocks fell off. Suddenly, there was a loud chirp and the edges of the feathers started to become red in colour.

It became mad!

Fang Yuan triggered the Red-eyed White King Bird and caused it to become mad.

"So what if you are mad?"

Fang Yuan glanced at it and his miniature elemental force quickly surged. His muscles became bigger and he grew slightly taller. He then charged right at it.

"Bang!"

"Bang!"

Back in the hole, pieces of rocks were flying around and there were many shock waves.

"Chirp! Chirp!"

"Keke!"

Outside the hole, the Flower Fox Ferret and the Iron-tailed Black Eagle were working well together. They sealed the entrance of the hole and dealt with the incoming Red-eyed White Birds.

In the past, both of them would not have been able to defeat the whole group of Red-eyed White Birds on their own. Now, with the ambush technique that they had learnt from Fang Yuan, the decreasing numbers of the Red-eyed White Birds and the benefits both of them got from the spiritual objects, their skills had improved tremendously. Not only were they able to hold the entrance of the hole on their own, they were able to defeat the large group of the Red-eyed White Birds as well.

This resulted in a big battle on the platform. Many white feathers fell onto the ground and the whole place looked as if it had just snowed.

"Keke!"

The Flower Fox Ferret lifted its claws and smashed through one of the opponent's head. It then jumped and managed to broke another opponent's neck.

"Chirp! Chirp!"

The remaining Red-eyed White Birds saw what happen to the dead ones and let out a sorrowful chirp. They then retreated.

How could the Iron-tailed Black Eagle let this chance go? Even though it was of no match for the Red-eyed White King Bird, it was able to deal with the other Red-eyed White Birds and chased after the remaining ones. It managed to kill the rest in the end.

Not long after, dead Red-eyed White Birds were seen everywhere in the Green peak with a few exceptions. A few remaining birds were seen hiding in their nests as they were too scared to come out.

Seeing this, both the Flower Fox Ferret and the Iron-tailed Black Eagle looked at each other before entering the hole.

The shock waves stopped and when both of them reached the end of the hole, they saw a small lake. There, a few bamboos were growing beside it and there was a huge bird's nest.

There was a pile of rocks at a corner of the hole and a big white feather could be seen there.

"Hoo...hoo...."

Fang Yuan spat out a long breath and he reverted to his original size. His clothing was already torn into pieces and there were 3 obvious claw marks on his chest.

"The Red-eyed White King Bird is indeed powerful. It can fight a martial artist at the peak of the 12th Gate after it got enraged.....Luckily I was at an advantage and had a stronger body, if not I would not have been able to defeat it!"

Fang Yuan reflected on his battle with the Red-eyed White King Bird and swallowed a bamboo fruit to recover his power.

He sighed upon seeing the nest.

Even though the spiritual plants were precious, why would both of them be even concerned about the spiritual plants when they were fighting to the death against each other?

Hence, many of the spiritual plants in the hole were destroyed during the battle.

"Chirp! Chirp!"

The Iron-tailed Black Eagle did not consider much and flew to the pile of rocks. It then stared at the Red-eyed White King Bird.

"Oh? You can feel it too?"

Fang Yuan was surprised and went to the pile of rocks as well. "It is actually not dead. It fainted because of its injuries and its madness. Now it is definitely no match for you....."

"Caw! Caw!"

Seeing this, the Iron-tailed Black Eagle then happily patted its wings and went off to look for spiritual objects with the Flower Fox Ferret.

Fang Yuan had a thought when he saw the Red-eyed White King Bird was now held captive.

There was no need to mention the advantage of spiritual beasts who could fly. The Red-eyed White King Bird was more powerful than the Iron-tailed Black eagle at its peak. It could become mad as well. If it was not in such a state, it would be difficult to defeat it.

Or maybe, Fang Yuan was no match for it and could probably not be able to escape from it if the battle was in a piece of clear land!

With such power, it was ideal for the Red-eyed White King Bird to be guarding the Green Peak regardless of anything.

A Red-eyed White King Bird that was alive was way better than a dead one.

Also, even though many of the Red-eyed White Birds were killed, the young ones and the eggs remained.

"Even though the chance is slim, one has to keep on trying with that glimpse of hope!"

Fang Yuan decided not to bother it anymore and went to the nest.

This Red-eyed White King Bird was addicted to collecting objects. Most of the spiritual objects in the Green Peak were moved to its nest.

However, most of the spiritual objects now were destroyed during the battle and Fang Yuan was in distress over this.

"Besides the bamboo, there is an unknown wisteria which is still in good condition....."

Fang Yuan then picked up a half-smashed fruit which was red in colour and had a few cracks on the surface. There was a look of distress on his face when he saw it.

How many types of spiritual objects were there in this world? With his limited knowledge about spiritual objects, he was not able to recognise all of them.

After much discussion, both the Flower Fox Ferret and the Iron-tailed Black Eagle could only give up a seed of a fruit and no one knew whether this seed could still grow into a plant.

"This spiritual land is not too big and it is sufficient to hold the whole farm...."

Fang Yuan had decided that it was necessary for the Questioning Heart Tea Tree and the Flame Jade Rice to be relocated to the Green Peak.

"I shall leave a portion of the land to try and grow the Vermillion Fruit. It should be able to grow...."

Fang Yuan felt happy about the plans that he had made for the new spiritual land.

With the removal of the Red-eyed White Birds, no one would be stopping him from making good use of this piece of spiritual land in the Green Peak.

"I should continue digging further to see if I can save a few of the other spiritual plants!"

After much calculations, he was in distress and started digging.

'Kacha! Kacha!'

At that moment, a wall which had no cracks on its surface finally collapsed and crumbled into pieces of rocks. A secluded and dark tunnel was then revealed.

Chapter 77: Inheritance

"Eh?"

Fang Yuan approached the side of the cave, examined it carefully, and felt anxious.

"This tunnel is smooth and doesn't seem to be formed naturally, but rather, man-made... Furthermore, the layer of rocks outside is obviously a cover-up. There was too much commotion made by the red-eyed white king bird and I while we were fighting, and the rocks gave way?"

After re-enacting the scene, Fang Yuan made a guess on what caused the rocks to give way.

"It seems that this spiritual land is not unclaimed. Did someone discover it before me?"

With this thought, he became solemn.

"Seeing the surroundings outside, it seems that it had been quite a while since someone came here?"

Fang Yuan lit a tree branch and threw it into the tunnel.

"Whoosh!"

The flame was huge and the surroundings were illuminated.

"There is no air circulation, so how is it possible..."

Seeing this, he became suspicious. "How is it possible for fresh air to enter this secret tunnel? Could it be that there is another tunnel inside that leads to the outside world?"

Who would have thought that within the nest of the red-eyed white king bird there would be a secret tunnel?

What was even more surprising was that this tunnel was antique, but seemed like it was rebuilt, and smelled like it was lost in time.

"Flower Fox Ferret!"

Fang Yuan nodded his head. The Flower Fox Ferret dashed into the cave and appeared after a short while.

"Is there any danger?"

Seeing the response of the Flower Fox Ferret, Fang Yuan sighed and carefully entered the cave.

The four walls of the cave were smoothened out, and with the light from the flame, a distinct shadow could be seen on the wall.

"This is impossible... What material is this made out of?"

Fang Yuan touched the wall, and it felt cold and smooth, like the finest silk, or a mirror. It was shocking.

Furthermore, within the woods, the purpose of a secret tunnel would be to bring convenience and act as a shortcut, or a hiding place; there was no need to make it so exquisite.

Unless... It was effortless to make it as such.

Fang Yuan continued walking inwards, and his shadow continually appeared on the walls, overlapping each other, appearing somewhat hypnotic.

All of a sudden, a layer of fog appeared, covering the ground.

"Go to sleep! Sleep!"

A strong hypnotic force was felt as Fang Yuan became sleepy.

"This is... The unknown force surrounding Green peak spiritual land?"

Fang Yuan felt a chill down his spine.

Surrounding the spiritual land, there was a similar hypnotic force protecting the land. This force seemed to only affect humans, and even Fang Yuan himself was previously affected by it, and only pulled through with a little bit of luck. After that incident, he slowly grew a resistance to it.

However, the force here was stronger by 10 times! 100 times!

Fang Yuan felt his eyelids becoming heavy, and even the miniature elemental force within him felt lazy, and he could not call upon it.

"The mind is the owner of the body. If it is calm, it will become wiser; if it is unsettled, one will become lost. In meditating, one must find peace and leave all behind. Only if this is fulfilled would someone find void and reconcile with the teachings. In leaving everything behind and meditating, there are four deviations in which one must avoid, and they are: The mind lost in blindness, the mind cannot be controlled, the mind does not know where it comes from and where to go, and one's thoughts do not agree with one's actions. Only by overcoming these four difficulties would one be able to control their mind and enter the next step of cultivation..."

In a moment, the entire Meditative Tea Ceremony appeared in his head.

Fang Yuan crossed his legs, sat down and began to recite.

After a while, he felt a cooling sensation flowing from his consciousness. He felt a chill all over, and the restricted inner force began to flow smoothly throughout his entire body again.

Fang Yuan opened his eyes, and a furry face appeared in front of him.

"Keke!"

The Flower Fox Ferret looked at Fang Yuan, and seeing that he was alright, patted its chest with its paws, as though it heaved a sigh of relief.

There was an urgent chirp coming from outside, and the Iron-tailed Black Eagle sounded rather desperate. It was too big-sized to enter the tunnel and could only make a commotion outside to attract attention.

"I'm alright!"

Fang Yuan shouted, and appeased the two spiritual beasts. He felt comforted that spiritual beasts were much more loyal than humans; if Zhou Wenwu was here instead, who would've known what would happen.

After getting a grip, Fang Yuan looked at the tunnel. The walls were as reflective as before, and the fog rose up from the ground as though he was in Heaven; the only difference was that there was no more hypnotizing effect.

"Master... You saved me once more..."

Fang Yuan sighed and walked on.

Very quickly, he approached a dead end. There was a crystal door made up of many tiny crystals.

Above the door was a crack, and within it was an obvious green colour. It seemed like a squarish jade piece.

With its features, Fang Yuan could recognise from one look and recall the jade with the Blood Magic Technique.

Without hesitation, he stretched his hand out to retrieve the jade.

"It is indeed similar..."

There was no special trap or mechanism when Fang Yuan attempted to retrieve it. He tried to push the crystal door, but it was as firm as a mountain and would not budge.

Mustering up all his strength, he tried a few more times. Fang Yuan was disappointed that even with his current strength, he still could not open the door.

"If the top of the door could have this piece of jade, then I wonder what other treasures would be inside?"

Fang Yuan hesitated, thought about it, and placed the jade on his forehead. He focused his magical energy on his Mind Palace, and something broke through.

"Rumble!"

A rumbling was heard from around. Fang Yuan became dizzy and a scene appeared in front of him!

Within the fog, an old man wearing a feathered robe appeared in front of the door, and looked over, full of compassion.

"Master?!"

Witnessing this scene made Fang Yuan feel like he was seeing a ghost!

This old man's image was exactly this same as his buried Master-Master Wenxin!

He witnessed Master Wenxin's last breath and even saw his body being cremated, and tombstone erected.

"Fang Yuan, do you feel shocked after witnessing this scene?"

Master Wenxin jokingly asked, and his tone and expression were the same as how Fang Yuan remembered him. "Master must let you know, that this is not a joke, nor it is my rebirth from the dead. What you are witnessing now is the imagery I left behind... This spiritual land was set-up by myself, and only you can pass the tests along the way to make it alive here!"

"Imagery..."

Fang Yuan realised that the surroundings were not real, but just a figment of his imagination. "Whatever is recorded in this jade is now playing in my mind? Is Master this powerful? This move is unprecedented... Furthermore, setting up this spiritual land?"

One of his suspicions was removed.

With such a strong hypnotic force around the entire mysterious spiritual land, how could his Meditative Tea Ceremony easily counter it?

The only possibility was that he held the 'key' to it!

This land was an inheritance from Master Wenxin!

After he cleared this doubt, another doubt arose. "Master... What kind of person are you, why would you leave it here for me to discover and not pass it to me directly?"

"When I was young, I made a little name for myself. I became tired of the happenings in the city and left to live in the secluded valley, then subsequently met you. All this is fate..."

Of course, Master Wenxin could not answer Fang Yuan's question; after all, he was just an imagery and had no mind of its own. It could only continue as to how it was programmed. "Master initially prepared to bring all my teachings to the grave, and let you led a simple life. That might be a good choice, but after that, I realised that you were not a normal person!"

Even though this was just an imagery, Master Wenxin's expression still shocked Fang Yuan, as though he was being seen through. He began to suspect if Master Wenxin had known about his secret all along.

"Therefore, as a special person, you will undergo a special journey. Your life will be full of surprises... Master shall leave you this piece of land, and see if fate brings you here!"

At the end, Master Wenxin's tone became serious. "Master will split my inheritance into a few parts, and you have to progressively inherit in order to receive the full inheritance. This is for your own good; after all, my teachings are too dangerous... But if you may succeed in the future, you can stand tall and proud..."

"Lastly, after inheriting what I have for you, you will definitely pass it down. I use to have a nickname in the past, called 'Heartless'..."

After Master Wenxin's description, Fang Yuan's expression kept changing; from the joy at the beginning, to being surprised by his master, then shock. It was complicated.

After a long while, the imagery disappeared, and what was left was a line of words.

"Master's inheritance..."

Fang Yuan did not read on. He kept the jade, looked at the crystal door, confused, and suddenly, he knelt down and kowtowed three times.

"Master, don't you worry. As your disciple, I will pass down whatever I have learnt, take over whatever you might have, and also... take your revenge!"

"Dong! Dong!"

After paying his respects, he left without turning around.

Master Wenxin's inheritance was split into a few parts, and without accomplishing what was written on the jade, no one could open the door, not even by brute force. Fang Yuan had no other choice but to leave.

The information he gathered today was too much for him. He needed to calm down and think through it.

"Chirp! Chirp!"

Fang Yuan took a quick glance at the unconscious red-eyed white king bird, went out to the cliff, rode the Iron-tailed Black Eagle, and flew over the Green Peak spiritual land.

Although this spiritual land was rather small, it was still over half a square mile. Although most of it was hilly and uneven, to Fang Yuan, it could be flattened out and converted to a farm and it could be expanded by another 200,000 square yards.

"Such a spiritual land with a dream-like surrounding... Who would have known that it was made by Master from scratch..."

Fang Yuan looked at the entire spiritual land, and his became increasingly shocked. "Is he a dream master?"

Based on Master Wenxin, he was a dream master.

A dream master was different from a spiritual knight who could conjure spells with the flick of a wrist and different from an alchemy master who could make spiritual pills. A dream master was much more superior, and based on rumours, on the list of talents, a dream master was ranked first, and if becoming a dream master was impossible, only then would one consider to become a spiritual knight or an alchemy master.

Furthermore, if one were to become a true high-level dream master, his dream world could be actualised, and such dream-like surroundings would be formed!

Chapter 78: Dream Master

"The spiritual land is either formed naturally on its own or formed when a dream master dies....."

The Iron-tailed Black Eagle landed on the peak. As Fang Yuan witnessed this scene, he was shocked and speechless.

At least, now he knew that Shi Yutong and the spiritual knight would never be able to achieve this. Master Wenxin was way more superior than them.

"All of a sudden, there is a change in the nature of this piece of land and it became a spiritual land.....The power of a dream master is indeed incredible!"

Fang Yuan still couldn't believe it. "Such master could rest in peace in solitude. What a secret type of energy this is..."

Obviously, this master was way beyond Wu Zong and the level of spiritual knights. He was probably the most powerful in the whole of the secluded valley and even in the country!

The world was too big and this country was just a small part of this world.

Fang Yuan knew that if he were to be discovered by his opponent now, he would not be spared.

"Just that.....in this world, miracles do happen and that is what that makes life much more interesting!"

He silently clenched his fists and glanced at his stats window.

With such a system that he had inherited, he was much more confident to improve himself quickly. One day, he would be able to achieve, or even surpass the level Master Wenxin had achieved!

By then, he would have helped to fulfil what Master Wenxin hadn't been able to!

What about now?

Fang Yuan forced himself to stop pondering over these thoughts and began to plan ahead.

"Iron-tailed Black Eagle, Flower Fox Ferret! Faster, you two! We will be quite busy for a period of time soon!"

The main obstacle in the spiritual land on the Green Peak was the Red-eyed White Birds. Even since they had been removed, Fang Yuan would want to explore the whole of Green Peak to collect spiritual objects and also to map out this place.

Of course, the main point was to find a suitable place here to build his own secret base and relocate the important spiritual plants from the secluded valley to here.

The Green Peak was not small.

It was not an easy task to find a suitable spot to live in such a vast place.

Luckily, Fang Yuan had the Iron-tailed Black Eagle with him to explore the whole area. After a period of exploration, they managed to find a suitable spot in the middle of the mountain. There was a large flat land of a few square miles. There was also a spiritual spring nearby and the place here was not far from the platform leading to the nest of the Red-eyed White King Bird.

Fang Yuan became a hardworking gardener. He organised this piece of land to make it suitable for further developments and built a fence around the perimeter. He then started the relocation process.

Luckily, there were still some spiritual bamboos left in the hole which the Red-eyed White King Bird lived in. However, the Vermillion Jade Rice was not on the list for the relocation. Fang Yuan was only aiming to relocate the Questioning Heart Tea Tree and the Flame Jade Rice.

"The soil in this spiritual land is way better than the one back in the secluded valley!"

Fang Yuan lifted the hoe and dug his way into the soil. He then nodded in agreement.

Back in the secluded valley, he had grown quite a huge amount of the Emerald Grass in the Vermillion Jade Rice farm. Emerald Grass could help to freshen the surrounding air and if he did not plant this spiritual plant here as well, the nutrients in the soil here would leak out easily.

However, there was still a big difference between the soil in the secluded valley and the soil here in the spiritual land.

"Not only the condition of the soil, the quality of the air, water and other factors were way inferior back in the secluded valley as compared to here....."

Fang Yuan looked at the relocated Questioning Heart Tea Tree that was in front of him and happily nodded his head.

Even after the relocation process, the Questioning Heart Tea Tree was not withered, but rather, was still in a good condition.

"I shall return to the secluded valley in the afternoon and relocate the Flame Jade Rice here. Then, I can shift my focus from the secluded valley to here...."

In the spiritual land, not only the spiritual plants were thriving, Fang Yuan himself felt comfortable to be in there.

Also, one could live longer in the spiritual land. A martial artist could have a higher chance of success in making a breakthrough here. If not, why would this piece of land be called the blessed land?

Not to mention, this piece of spiritual land was left behind by Master Wenxin and it meant a lot to Fang Yuan.

"In future, the secluded valley will just be like an outpost and the main base will be right here in this spiritual land!"

The place here in the Green Peak was quite secluded and it was

difficult for others to discover this place. Also, there was a strong hypnotising fog to guard against anyone who dared to trespass.

Fang Yuan was immune to the hypnotisation. An expert in 4 Heavenly Gates or even a Wu Zong would find it difficult to trespass this area, and they would end up sleeping forever.

"The power of the dream master is indeed great....."

Fang Yuan went to the cliff where the Red-eyed White Birds were residing previously and looked at the nests. There were a few young birds and eggs remaining..... he pondered about this silently.

"Chirp! Chirp!"

This was a strong gust of wind and the Iron-tailed Black Eagle came back with a chicken and a wild rabbit.

"Hmm, very good!"

Fang Yuan clapped his hands and said, "Flower Fox Ferret and the Iron-tailed Black Eagle, I will need both of your help to take care of these young birds for a while!"

"Keke!"

Upon hearing Fang Yuan's request, the Flower Fox Ferret opened its eyes widely and gave a speechless look.

The Iron-tailed Black Eagle was even more shocked by Fang Yuan's request. The Iron-tailed Black Eagle and the Red-eyed White Birds were enemies. How could one request it to take care of the young birds? What was Fang Yuan thinking?

"After all, you all are birds and have some similarities...."

Fang Yuan pushed the responsibility to the two spiritual beasts and carried the wild rabbit back into the hole.

"Chirp! Chirp!"

A loud but weak chirp was heard.

"Bang!"

A giant silhouette appeared and it looked as if it had knocked onto something as a loud noise was produced.

"Why? Red-eyed White King Bird, you have still not accepted reality?"

Fang Yuan took two steps forward and gave a cheerful expression.

Previously, the Red-eyed White King Bird was staring at him furiously.

Now, many of its bones were broken and it was held by a big metal chain. Furthermore, a few giant rocks were holding it down and it could barely move.

Currently, the Red-eyed White King Bird's elemental energy had been exhausted from the battle and it would be hard for it to escape since it was restrained.

After defeating the Red-eyed White King Bird, Fang Yuan didn't kill it in the end. Instead, he trapped it.

However, the Red-eyed White King Bird was still full of pride. It decided to have a hunger strike since it was trapped!

"You still don't want to eat?"

Fang Yuan then threw the wild rabbit to its mouth and took out a bamboo fruit. "It feels terrible after being enraged, doesn't it? Do you want this?"

"Chirp! Chirp!"

The Red-eyed White King Bird turned its head and did not even look at Fang Yuan.

Even though through its eyes, one could see its weakness. However, it was still proud. It was once considered an overlord, so how could it admit defeat to humans?

Especially to an evil human who killed its own species!

"Hoo....looks like this is impossible!"

Fang Yuan shook his head and knew that even though it was a spiritual beast, it could only survive up to a month without any food or water. He could end up getting just a dead spiritual bird.

Also, his plans to fully overcome this spiritual bird would fail.

"Looks like.....fairytales are lies. How can you accept it when you had just killed so many people? Are you brainless or are you a moron?"

"You were probably related to my master and that was why I didn't kill you!?"

Fang Yuan shook his head and sealed the entrance of the tunnel with pieces of rocks. He then went to the platform outside and saw that the Flower Fox Ferret and the Iron-tailed Black Eagle were struggling to take care of the birds. It was an interesting scene to look at even though it was a mess.

"This piece of spiritual land is finally mine!"

He looked at the sky and there was a bright orange light shining at this place through the blue sky. It must be a beautiful sunset.

Fang Yuan crossed his knees and sat down. He then took out a piece of jade and had mixed feelings.

He placed the jade between his eyebrows and concentrated his magical energy. A passage on a technique appeared and it was beautifully written.

Even though he had read the passage many times, regardless, he once again read from the start to the end and understood the meaning of the passage.

This jade was left behind by Master Wenxin and it was a way for him to become a dream master!

"A dream master! The energy from a dream master is considered

to be the most powerful even though it is similar to that of spiritual knights, alchemy masters and array masters!"

Master Wenxin's method was simple but it was convincingly effective.

Especially after Fang Yuan had personally witnessed the miracle in this spiritual land.

"A dream master is one who would always make contact with the dream world! A dream....It is the most magical thing in this world. How are humans able to dream? Why do scenes of the future appear in dreams sometimes? The answers to these questions are supposed to be discovered by a dream master and once he knows that he is dreaming, he will be able to accomplish anything!"

Even though such processes were illusory, Fang Yuan knew that a dream master could accomplish this.

Mind could affect matter and consciousness could affect reality!

The spiritual land right in front of him was the best scene to relate to the statement!

A real dream master could be very powerful and scary at his later stage!

Fang Yuan also understood why Master Wenxin praised his unique talents and left something valuable behind for him to inherit.

"That secret had already been discovered by Master Wenxin!"

The strange dream world that I had.....No, that was not even a dream. It was reliving my entire and actual life....."

"Since Master Wenxin was a dream master and was sensitive to the details that were related to the dream world, how could he not have discovered?"

"Or maybe, because of this, he felt that I had the qualities of a

dream master? Or maybe he was hoping that I could control what was happening in the dream world and not be confused by it?"

.....

These few possibilities came into his mind and he understood Master Wenxin's effort. He was touched by it and was more determined than before.

Chapter 79: Heaven's Element

The world was vast and was split into 4 parts, namely Heaven's Element, Earth's Branches, East's Victory and South's Departure. In each part, the population was more than a billion, and there were as many countries as there were stars in the Milky Way. In these countries, many things were happening; demons and beasts having their own way, humans and gods co-existing, bizarre occurrences, and the most eye-catching phenomenon was the strength of the 'True Cultivator'.

In Heaven's element, there was a Green Cloud mountainous ridge, and a Green Cloud House.

Green Cloud Sect was one of the top 9 True Cultivator influence in Heaven's element. At one time, the sect trained 5 exceptional grandmasters and was therefore very well-known. Furthermore, there were more than 10 highly experienced old eccentric men at the helm. The sect's name was at the top for more than 10,000 years, and there were countless talents trained from the sect, and therefore was referred to as the 'Lucky Sect'.

Green Cloud House was a branch of the Green Cloud Sect and was responsible for recruiting and training the younger generation of disciples. Every 10 years, one of the many in the House would be recommended to join the Main Sect, and become an honorary disciple. His reputation and influence would then be comparable to a nation's master.

Within Heaven's Element, there were more than a thousand of such Houses, and our story would begin from one of these small Houses.

"Fang Yuan, wake up and do your chores!"

In the dormitory, Fang Yuan woke up, rubbed his eyes, and while he was still half-asleep, he noticed a few disciples in green yelling at him, as though they looked down on him.

"Chores? Oh, this is what the disciples of the House have to do daily. They will have to carry water, chop wood, tire themselves out, practice breathing techniques, all to hope for some breathing space and a good foundation..."

Some information popped up in his mind, and Fang Yuan recalled his identity.

"I was originally a farmer's son. It was fate that I saved a House deacon's life. Seeing that I looked special, he brought me to the mountains... A pity that it was his blunder. Although I might look like I have celestial blood, I was the useless one out of the many people with celestial blood. Five years had passed and I have not felt the fate to become something greater, and therefore became the laughing stock..."

Although this memory felt extremely real, for unknown reasons, Fang Yuan felt a little odd and said. "F*ck... Why is this beginning a useless piece of wood yet again? I'm sick of this obstruction okay?"

As he exclaimed, he shocked himself.

As for 'useless piece of wood' and 'obstruction', he didn't even know what he meant, and why he would say it.

"Eh? Fang Yuan, you're quite daring huh!"

A few disciples in green were shocked. Even though they did not know what he was saying, his mocking tone was rather obvious, and their faces turned red with anger.

"This kind of useless wood should be chased out of the House!"

"He owes it all to Deacon Wang..."

"I have never seen such an impudent brat in the House before!"

"Pui, how can this type of person wish to become immortal!"

"Fang Yuan, you seem to be full of energy! You shall settle all the chores today by yourself!"

One of the disciples took a step forward and smiled with pride.

"Did you hear what I said?"

"So what if I am a failed celestial blood?"

Fang Yuan clenched his fist, his veins bulging out. "I will successfully build my foundation, enter the Main Sect and become an Immortal Cultivator!"

"Ha ha!"

"What did I just hear?"

"Did the useless person just claimed that he wanted to be an Immortal Cultivator, and enter the Main Sect?"

The crowd became silent, and slowly, laughter began to fill the room. A young man who came from Wang Hou's Family appeared unfriendly, squinted his eyes and said, "Don't boast, be careful with your words!"

He didn't have to do the dirty work; a few followers came forward, preparing to teach Fang Yuan a lesson.

"Cough Cough!"

A loud commanding voice was heard from behind.

"Good day Deacon!"

Many young ladies paid their greetings and opened up a pathway. A middle-aged man walked out, his sharp eyes sweeping across the room. "What are you all doing here? Go and do your chores!"

"Yes, sir!"

Even the young man from Wang Hou Family did not dare to disobey the deacon and left promptly. Before he left, he stared at Fang Yuan, which sent chills down his spine, as though a snake was crawling on his back.

"You, leave too!"

The deacon stared at Fang Yuan, shook his head, and slowly took his leave.

Fang Yuan went back to the room and carried his hoe and bamboo basket.

...

The Green Cloud mountainous ridge was the source of green wood. This type of wood was entirely green, and strong as steel. It was the perfect material of best quality to construct buildings or ships.

If left to grow more than a hundred years, the wood could be used entirely to form some low-grade tools.

With this alone, Green Cloud House could survive on its own, without trading with the neighbouring smaller countries.

Therefore, chopping the green wood was the daily chore of the lowly disciples.

Of course, there were not many like Fang Yuan, who tried for five years but was still not fated for anything greater.

"Piang!"

As the axe landed on a crack in the green wood, there was a continuous sound. The impact on Fang Yuan's hand was unbearable, and he felt numb.

He took in a deep breath, and with a straight face, landed another hit on the wood. He controlled his breathing and breathed in a rhythmic fashion.

"Through chopping wood every day, I would train my circulation, bones and joints to get some sense of Spirit... Even though I have zero potential, I should take around a year to enter the Main Sect, but now I have spent five years..."

After an afternoon, Fang Yuan finally finished chopping his green wood. He wiped his sweat and smiled. "After gaining a sense of Spirit, I still need to build up my foundation for a hundred days before I can commence by Spirit training! There are 13 tiers in

Spirit training, and only after completing everything, I would be at the pinnacle and would finally have the rights to try and get assessed into the Main Sect... I've heard that after the Demonic Wind stage, the inner Dragon and Tiger in me would combine, and undergo 19 Misfortunes before entering the 'Golden Pill' stage!"

"Within the Golden Pill stage, I would finally be comparable to the standards of an outer disciple. And as for when I'll undergo the 39 Calamities and fusion of Elemental Infant so as to enter the inner Sect... After that, there will be Magic-splitting, Magic-melting and Magic-fusing... All these realms are increasing in difficulty. Furthermore, the Misfortunes would become increasingly scarier, and at the stage of Disaster, in every century there would be one 99 Wind-Fire Misfortune, and if one can survive it 9 times consecutively, and finally able to fly in the sunrise towards the heavens, one would become Immortal... I must become Immortal!!!"

"Wait a minute... Immortal Cultivation sounds familiar... What strange language am I speaking in again?"

Fang Yuan scratched his head, drank a mouthful of water and prepared to continue chopping wood.

"I found him, he's here!"

All of a sudden, there was a commotion along the pathway to the mountains, and a few figures appeared.

Fang Yuan felt miserable as he saw the group approaching.

Those that appeared were the many young masters from Wang Hou's Family and a few followers.

"Fang Yuan... You were lucky in the morning that Deacon came to help you. However, this is the wilderness, I shall wait and see who would come to save you now!"

A bulky young man came forward, and as he clenched his fist popping sounds could be heard.

"These few have already comprehended the sense of Spirit, and are within the Spirit training stage. I am no match for them... Run!"

Without a second thought, Fang Yuan turned around and ran.

Just a few followers would give him problems already, not to mention the backup brought by the young masters from Wang Hou's Family. They were highly skilled and their progress was incredibly quick; rumour has it that there were about to enter the 5th tier of Spirit training!

"Give chase!"

Seeing Fang Yuan escaping, a few followers naturally gave chase.

Their stamina was good, and they were quick. By splitting up, they cornered Fang Yuan to the edge of a cliff.

"Haha... Try running!"

By splitting up, they cornered him, and the young masters stood behind, excited. "Beat him up! See if he'll dare to talk to Sister Shui Ling any more!"

"What?"

Fang Yuan felt unjust. "You are against me just because of this? I have absolutely no relationship with Sister Shui Ling, we just had a few words..."

"What, who would be as stupid as me, beaten up for nothing..."

Unknowingly, Fang Yuan felt a sense of familiarity as he witnessed this scene.

It was as though he went through the same thing once before, it was as though a girl whom he was not close with brought him trouble too.

"It's this feeling again... Wait a minute, Why... am I running? Why am I here?"

"Who... am I?"

Fang Yuan mumbled to himself, lost. He released his essence all around, and his breathing changed.

"Beat him up!"

A few followers did not wait and rushed up.

"Ha! Eagle Claw!"

Shadows flew by, and fractures were heard. The young masters were shocked.

They did not expect this to happen; the ones on the floor crying for help were their followers instead.

"Secular martial arts..."

He frowned. "Is it that strong?"

"It takes one day to see through, and realise that I am me all along!"

Fang Yuan ignored him and laughed. He was ecstatic. "So... This is the feeling of a dream master!"

He now realised that this entire world was his dream world!

From existing in his dream to figuring out his identity to waking up and being aware, these were the important gates for a dream master to break through!

Not everyone could become aware in their dream.

It would be more likely for one to be sucked in and get lost in their own dream.

However, Fang Yuan easily broke through this first Gate in his first dream!

"It seems that Master did teach me a thing or two..."

Fang Yuan became emotional.

Although Master Wenxin did not directly teach him the ways of a

dream master from the beginning, the Meditative Tea Ceremony that he passed down was strongly related to the role of a dream master.

Furthermore, he grew up in an alternate dream world from young and had plenty of experience.

With these two factors, he broke through the 'Riddle of the Dream' relatively quickly, quicker than the average person.

"Is this person... crazy?"

At one side, a young master noticed Fang Yuan talking to himself and began to worry. He clenched his teeth and took out a talisman which gave out a spiritual light.

This was a treasure bought at a high price; the young master felt that it was a waste to use it on Fang Yuan. With a shout, he exclaimed. "Ji!"

"Whoosh!"

A bright light flashed, and both of Fang Yuan's arms dropped down cleanly.

Chapter 80: Dream Disciple

"Haha... This Golden Blade Talisman is indeed a useful spiritual talisman!"

Seeing the power of the talisman, the young master laughed heartily, but after a while, his laughter stopped. He stared at Fang Yuan, who was bleeding profusely, and his face turned blank. "You... you... you..."

The physical body would be extremely precious to those Immortal Cultivators who have yet to break through and enter the Golden Pill period.

As for him, left with two empty shoulders, he should have passed out from the pain, or even die!

Surprisingly, Fang Yuan appeared extremely calm, as though it was not his own body that was hurt.

"Since all of this is a dream, then the pain and the suffering I am experiencing would be fake... As long as I want to exist in this dream world, I will be able to do so. In theory, I am the owner of this entire dream world!"

Fang Yuan tried to change himself and return to his real state; he tried regrowing his limbs, and later on, he tried to increase his cultivation level directly to Tribulation Stage.

Nothing happened. His plan to cheat and become an immortal failed miserably.

Following that, Fang Yuan tried to change the physical world. For instance, he tried to summon the 99 Wind-Fire Tribulations to strike and kill those noisy pests but failed again.

"Ah... It seems like I have to take things step by step!"

Fang Yuan recalled the description of the dream world. Some people, under certain circumstances, would be aware that they

were having a nightmare, but would not be able to wake up from it. Furthermore, they could do nothing about the fear in the dream, because they were not able to control their own consciousness, and Fang Yuan was in this situation.

"To be able to be conscious in a dream is already an important step. The next step would be to remain conscious the moment the dream begins. As the saying goes, I would always know who fell asleep first!"

Fang Yuan took a few steps forward. The blood from his arm already formed a pool on the ground, but he was still calm, as though it wasn't even his own blood.

"What are you doing? Fre... Freak! Don't... Don't come over!"

The young master was in shock and fell to the floor. A foul smell came from his crotch, as he peed in his pants.

Regardless of how high he was in his Spirit training, he was after all a young man, and after witnessing such a gruesome scene was scared till he peed!

"I guess that death is still the quickest way to leave the dream world in the initial stage? Of course, I must have the intention of leaving, if not, even the Tribulation stage would be able to wipe me completely off from this world..."

Fang Yuan frowned, took two steps forward and lifted the young master up.

"Very normal... Very real..."

He cut the wrist of the young master, and the arteries, veins and bones were visible.

The young master continued to struggle and threw a few objects on Fang Yuan. A few more bloody holes in his body appeared.

"Interesting! Interesting! Would I still return here the next time I dream?"

Although the dream world was interesting, the flow of time in both worlds had to be managed well.

In history, there were dream masters who were careless while cultivating and were trapped in their dream world, unable to escape. In the end, they died of hunger in the real world!

As a rule of thumb, whenever a junior dream master trained, there should always be a senior dream master by his side to look out for him.

Fang Yuan did not have a senior by his side, and to be safe, he wanted to leave immediately without having to consider if he still had enough time in the real world.

"Only after I am able to control my dream world will I become the owner of the world. By then, controlling the flow of time would not be a problem... Based on this alone, I could get endless time compared to others..."

Fang Yuan heaved a sigh, brought the screaming young master to the edge of the cliff, and jumped down.

...

"Rumble!"

Green Peak spiritual land.

Fang Yuan's body shook, and he opened his eyes.

"Entering a dream... so interesting... Who would've known that my first dream world would be a world of Immortal Cultivators? I thought that it would be the other weird dream!"

He was longing to experience the other modernised world full of technology another time.

However, a junior dream master could not control his own dream worlds, and could only roam around dream worlds without control.

"Eh?"

He looked at the incense in front of him and saw a halfway-burnt incense smoking away.

"I spent more than 10 years in the dream, but it is not even equivalent to the time to burn one incense in the real world?"

The speed of time in dream worlds conjured by dream masters was usually faster than that of the real world. Of course, there were still many weird and wonderful dream worlds, and therefore dream masters could cheat time and explore every one of them.

Fang Yuan heaved a sigh and placed the jade on his forehead.

"The cultivation of a dream master is split into 4 steps: Entering a dream, becoming self-aware, changing the dream world and lastly, ruling the dream world!"

Becoming self-aware meant that every time one entered a dream, he could be aware that he was dreaming, and not be confused.

The next step was changing one's body, followed by the surroundings and finally the entire dream world. Only then would one rule the dream world!

After this dream world training, Fang Yuan felt a cool stream of knowledge and consciousness flowing into his Mind Palace and into his body. He became refreshed, took in a deep breath, and glanced at his stats window:

"Name: Fang Yuan

Essence: 8.0

Spirit: 7.9

Magic: 4.1

Profession: Dream Disciple (Junior)

Cultivation: [Martial Artist (11th Gate)]

Technique: [Black Sand Palm (Grade 5)], [Eagle Claw Iron Skin Technique (Grade 11) (Able to harness Elemental Force)]

Skill: [Medicine (Level 3)], [Botany (Level 3)]"

"Dream Disciple - You are new to being a dream master, and have the skills to become self-aware in a dream; these skills are the most basics in the profession!"

"Every dream training would increase [Magic] by '0.1', and that's not too bad!"

Fang Yuan nodded in satisfaction.

The requirements of a dream master were high and unfathomable; even though Fang Yuan himself possessed 4 times more magical energy than the average person, he could barely reach the basics of a dream master cultivation!

Of course, the harder the initial stages, the greater the potential of cultivation.

"The initial stages of a dream master training would begin in one's own dream world as that was the safest. One's magical energy would be greatly affected if they were to get injured or die in another's dream world... One is only considered to have attained the title of 'Dream Master' when one gains full control of his own dream world, after which the exploration of other dream worlds would begin..."

Fang Yuan read what Master Wenxin had left behind for him, and knew that at the beginning, a dream master would be weak, and may not even be able to protect himself.

Only when one had become a true dream master and begin to explore other people's dream worlds, would the real power of the dream master surface.

"While martial artists train their Spirit in their Dantian, a dream disciple cultivates his Mind Palace between the eyebrows. When he reaches the stage of dream master, he would be cultivating dream elemental force..."

Fang Yuan rubbed his forehead.

He felt a cooling sensation in his Mind Palace; it was a totally different type of power from inner force.

Based on its characteristics, it was more similar to the blood elemental force and a spiritual knight's elemental force. At the same time, there were slight differences as well.

"When I am able to fully control my dream world, this miniature elemental force will transform into dream elemental force, and act as the foundation for my cultivation!"

Fang Yuan stood up, loosened his joints, and walked out.

He came out from a grass hut built at the halfway point of Green Peak spiritual land. There was fencing around, and the Flame Jade Rice and Questioning Heart Tea were all growing well, within the fencing.

"Indeed... Spiritual land is the best for growing spiritual plants!"

Fang Yuan approached the boundaries of the fence and arrived at a carefully carved out plot of land for plantation.

Other than the two matured spiritual plants, he planted the seed of the bamboo fruit, and a few other spiritual plant's seeds which he recovered from the bird's nest.

Hopefully, by harnessing the magical abilities of this spiritual land, the spiritual plants would be able to germinate.

The cultivation of a dream master could not be rushed. At this stage, a dream a day would be enough. Fang Yuan would spend his remaining energy on setting-up the spiritual land, and try to win over the red-eyed white birds.

Those birds were made to starve, and when desperate, obeyed those who gave them food, which comforted Fang Yuan.

As long as they were willing to put down their pride for once, there would be a chance of taming them in the future. Slowly, day after day, step by step, no matter how resolute they were, they

would surely be tamed one day.

The only worry was the red-eyed white king bird, with no fighting will, and was already useless.

"And these bird eggs... Let the Iron-tailed Black Eagle hatch them? Seems like an original idea!"

Fang Yuan climbed on a platform and held a large white egg in his hands. He felt the little movements of the chick within the egg, and shook his head. "Should I..... Look for a bunch of hen to try it out? It may work!"

If the red-eyed white king bird knew of this plan, he would be so embarrassed, and might even change its mind and listen to Fang Yuan.

"Chirp! Chirp!"

Just as Fang Yuan was deciding whether or not to use the bird eggs to provoke the red-eyed white kind bird, a gust of wind came and the Iron-tailed Black Eagle landed on the platform, carrying the Flower Fox Ferret on its back.

It had been teasing the other white birds together with the Flower Fox Ferret for the past few days, and both of them had been travelling to and from the secluded valley and did not know that Fang Yuan was considering asking it to become the eggs' nanny.

"What happened?"

He was signalled to come towards them, and Fang Yuan smiled. He froze.

"Keke!"

The Flower Fox Ferret let out a pitiful cry. There was a clean wound on it; it was not harmed by other animals, but rather, by a weapon.

"This injury... Something has happened to the secluded valley?!"

Fang Yuan squinted his eyes, looking fierce.

"True... I've placed all my attention to this spiritual land, and tossed aside everything else, could it be that something has happened?"

"The only issue I have is that that used to be my home and my Master's reputation!"

"Who dares to provoke me!"

Fang Yuan let out a cold laugh and rode on the back of the Iron-tailed Black Eagle. "Let's go! We shall teach them a lesson!"

"Chirp! Chirp!"

The Iron-tailed Black Eagle spread its wings, soared into the sky and disappeared.

...

Secluded valley.

Two groups of people were waiting outside of the straw pavilion.

One group was Elder Han and Zhou Wenwu, while the other group was a group of foreign martial artists crowding around an old man, who was clad in a quail-feathered robe and appeared to be full of energy.

"The white ferret was Doctor Fang's pet, and you dare to harm it?"

Zhou Wenwu looked at Elder Han, who did not seem to put the matter at heart. Yet, he still stood out to exclaim.

Chapter 81: Vigour of Style

"Master is not here, and the white ferret is no match for them. This group of people looks menacing, what should I do?"

Zhou Wenwu glanced anxiously at Elder Han.

Standing right in front of him was an old man who was dressed in feathered clothing. He was known as 'Old Crane' and was a famous doctor in the Secluded Mountains Prefecture.

The purpose of his visit was to embarrass Fang Yuan after receiving news that Fang Yuan was a well-known doctor in the secluded valley.

Even though Zhou Wenwu had got information that Old Crane was coming and immediately came back with backup, the sly Elder Han did not want to get himself involved, leaving Zhou Wenwu to deal with it.

"Hey! You are a stupid beast with no manners. You dare to hurt others, so there is no wrong in teaching you a lesson!"

One of the bodyguards of Old Crane then joked.

This bodyguard had an immense energy. He was good-looking, but his eyebrows made him looked evil.

Zhou Wenwu did not dare to say a word.

According to Elder Han, this bodyguard, Hu Yuxu, was a [Martial Artist (10th Gate)] who had the combination of Yin and Yang and was about to break through the 11th Gate.

If not for the Flower Fox Ferret, this bodyguard would have already trespassed the secluded valley.

However, the Flower Fox Ferret sustained slight injuries by the bodyguard's moves.

Hu Yuxu was afraid of the Flower Fox Ferret as it was incredibly quick and that he was also unfamiliar with the terrain in the

secluded valley. Hence, he did not dare to trespass this area.

Little did he know that the Flower Fox Ferret had gone out with the Iron-tailed Black Eagle to find help; he thought the Flower Fox Ferret was probably hiding somewhere and setting up an ambush.

In fact, if Fang Yuan had not ordered the Iron-tailed Black Eagle not to appear in front of anyone, both the Flower Fox Ferret and the Iron-tailed Black Eagle would have been able to defeat Hu Yuxu together. However, it would be a different situation if the two spiritual beasts were to meet a few martial artists that were as skilful as Hu Yuxu at the same time.

"Since Fang Yuan is nowhere to be seen, shall I charge straight into the secluded valley to force him to come out?"

Hu Yuxu's eyes were filled with danger and he glanced at Old Crane.

He then saw Old Crane stroking his beard. He seemed to have no idea on what to do next.

He was extremely smart! Anyone who knew him would agree, as Hu Yuxu unknowingly looked at Old Crane and the men behind him.

Even though Old Crane brought quite a number of men with him this time, there were only two Martial Artist in the 4 Heavenly Gates who were truly capable.

One of them was Hu Yuxu, while the other was a middle-aged man, standing straight with his sword.

Even though the other man looked like he was in his thirties, his eyebrows were white and his eyes gave a weary look, showing that he was not young.

"So what do we do, Zhang Sheng?"

Hu Yuxu asked. If both of them were to join hands and attack, the Flower Fox Ferret would not be a problem for them.

After all, Zhang Sheng was very skilful and was an 11th Gate Martial Artist. In addition, he had a good reputation.

"I am only obliged to escort Old Crane, in the form of returning a favour!"

Zhang Sheng shook his head and said, "Since the owner is not here, wouldn't it be rude for us to trespass his area like that?"

"Very well!"

Elder Han overheard their conversation and nodded his head. "I have heard that Zhang Sheng from Cangshui County is not only highly skilled in martial arts, but also a righteous person with good character. Looks like that is true!"

Upon hearing this, Old Crane replied, "Elder Han, I have seen your injuries before. If you trust me, I will attend to you personally and guarantee that within 3 months, you will fully recover!"

"Hmm?"

Elder Han was shocked by his words.

To be honest, he had been treated by Fang Yuan for quite a long while already and has his suspicions. He felt that Fang Yuan was intentionally dragging the treatment, which irritated him a little.

If he had no other choice, he had to let Fang Yuan continue to treat him.

However, did Old Crane just assured him a full recovery in 3 months?

Elder Han looked down, deep in thought.

"Hu Yuxu, go and announce our arrival again. If Fang Yuan still doesn't appear, bring Ah Da and Ah Er in and invite him out!"

Old Crane said in a deep voice.

"Yes, Old Crane!"

Two martial artists appeared behind his back. They were both

[Martial Artist (8th Gate)]. Both of them looked alike and were twins.

Both of them were different from Zhang Sheng. Zhang Sheng was repaying a favour to Old Crane, but these two brothers were just servants and following orders.

Upon hearing his order, Zhang Sheng looked worried. Elder Han flinched but did not stop them.

Zhou Wenwu was left alone to block the entrance of the valley and gave a helpless look.

He was not loyal to the point where he was willing to sacrifice his life for Fang Yuan. This was all he could do.

"Hehe.....a martial artist with inner power, and yet you dare to block me. I must say that you are very courageous indeed! Very courageous!"

Hu Yuxu stared at him and was full of mystery.

As he stared into Hu Yuxu's eyes, Zhou Wenwu started to have goosebumps all over. He trembled and felt a huge pressure coming, making him retreat and fumble over his steps.

"Very good, you are remarkably brave!"

At that moment, a gentle voice came from the valley inside. Zhou Wenwu immediately stood straight and said, "The doctor is here!"

"Gentlemen, you have come from far and been making things difficult for me. May I know why?"

Among the clear voice, a young man took only a few steps and arrived outside the secluded valley. Zhang Sheng's eyes glittered as he saw this.

"Eh?"

Elder Han was also surprised when he saw Fang Yuan!

Fang Yuan had given him a mysterious vibe. He realised that it

was not because of his medical skills, but his martial arts!

He also felt that even after fully recovering, he still might not be able to deal with Fang Yuan, which frightened him!

Previously, Fang Yuan didn't reveal his martial arts and looked harmless. As he revealed his Lightness skill, everyone was shocked!

"Zhou Wenwu, you have done a good job. You can leave now!"

Fang Yuan patted Zhou Wenwu's shoulders, flattering him with recognition of his good job.

If he wasn't busy hiding the Iron-tailed Black Eagle, he would have arrived earlier. However, he came at the right time as he could see Elder Han's heart waver, and witnessed Zhou Wenwu's determination at the same time. He realised that Zhou Wenwu was loyal enough to be worth training.

Even though Fang Yuan knew that Zhou Wenwu was forced to take action, it didn't matter! Regardless if he did it out of his own will, it didn't matter to Fang Yuan. What mattered was that at least he took action! That was commendable!

'Even a dog who is keeping guard has to be rewarded if it has done well. Not to mention.....Zhou Wenwu's martial arts is not strong enough and he has yet to attain the 6th Gate. He will still be defeated easily!'

Fang Yuan thought about helping Zhou Wenwu break through the 6th Gate, which was a piece of cake for him.

As the leader, he should help his men out as it would make them more loyal and obedient.

What about the possibility that Zhou Wenwu might betray Fang Yuan in the future? If he could maintain this speed for improvement, Zhou Wenwu actually would never be able to catch up with Fang Yuan and therefore would probably never betray Fang Yuan.

"So, you are the famous doctor in the secluded valley?"

Hu Yuxu looked at Fang Yuan with frivolous expression.

After all, with his experience, a doctor who was not at least 50 years old with a wealth of experience in medicine was not considered an expert.

Fang Yuan was young, and he was not a magical demon with healing prowess. Therefore, he must be a fraud!

"Hmm?"

Fang Yuan gave a mysterious look in his eyes, which frightened Hu Yuxu a little.

"An expert in the 10th Gate, Yang Gate?"

He murmured a few words, shocking Hu Yuxu. "Even though you are a 10th Gate Martial Artist, your energy and blood are damaged, which makes your foundation weak. You look sickly and I can see that there is an imbalance between the Yin and Yang in your body from the energy of your Mind Palace.....You are only comparable to an average 9th Gate Martial Artist. It appears that you made your breakthrough in the Yin and Yang energies via evil means? How many people have you harmed in the process?"

"What?"

Hu Yuxu retreated and cold sweat started forming on his forehead.

The technique which he used was known as the Inverse Yin Elemental Technique. It was an evil technique but one would be able to progress and make a breakthrough of the Yin and Yang quickly.

He didn't expect that Fang Yuan could see through his method in one look.

Even though he was stealthy in his actions, many innocent people had suffered because of him. If they could relate all these

incidents to him, his reputation would go all the way down. From the suspicious looks of Zhang Sheng and other martial artists, he knew that they already suspected that something was wrong with him!

"No wonder he couldn't take criticisms and could improve tremendously....."

"I had also heard that Hu Yuxu was lewd and had many mistresses....There were also rumours that he liked men as well..."

"I just recalled that Hu Yuxu disappearance would always coincide with the appearance of the pervert Flower Butterfly. Could he be....."

A few whisperings were heard, making Hu Yuxu disgusted.

"Nonsense..."

He felt wronged and replied with a sense of justice. "I am using the Frozen Water Formula and it is not through evil means. Please stop accusing me!"

"Really? How unfortunate!"

Fang Yuan glanced at him with pity in his eyes. "Even though this evil technique allows one to progress quickly, there are various consequences! After all, you stole your Yin and Yang energies from others. From one hour before and after noon and midnight, do you feel that your Yin and Yang are unbalanced, causing you much pain from their clashes? How does it feel to be bipolar too?"

"Also, you will probably not be able to break through the Earth Gate in your entire lifetime. The things that I have just mentioned are not written down in that technique, isn't it? And did the doctor beside you remind you of this?"

"How....how did you know?"

Hu Yuxu's voice exclaimed in shock, as though someone had discovered his biggest secret.

As he spoke, he realised that he should not have said it.

"Wow!"

Zhang Sheng exclaimed. "So you are this type of person. I feel ashamed to be on the same side as you! Hu Yuxu, I shall not hurt you today for Old Crane's sake. However, if I were to see you doing evil things again, I will not hesitate to stop you with no mercy! Mark my words!"

"Aahh!"

Hu Yuxu's expression changed. With a shout, he escaped!

Chapter 82: Solution

"This....."

The rest looked at Fang Yuan and was speechless.

Fang Yuan was able to discover such a big secret of a [Martial Artist (10th Gate)] just by looking at him for the first time, and even made him escape in embarrassment?

Shouldn't this sort of medical skill be at the peak of the 'looking' stage of the 4 diagnostic methods?

Among all the onlookers, Elder Han was the most embarrassed.

His heart previously wavered at the same time when Fang Yuan appeared, which caused him to be very embarrassed of himself in front of Fang Yuan.

'Without violence, he was able to defeat his enemy with just a few sentences. What potential!'

Elder Han became a little frightened when he thought about this. As he was thinking, Fang Yuan questioned Old Crane. "Are you also a doctor?"

"Correct. Old Crane is a well known and respected doctor in the Secluded Mountains Prefecture!"

Ah Da, on behalf of Old Crane, was trying to hint to Fang Yuan that Fang Yuan was just a young man and was still considered a junior when compared to Old Crane.

"Oh! Then may I ask you, Old Crane, if you noticed the abnormalities on Hu Yuxu's body?"

Fang Yuan continued to press on with his questions, as he reached a climax.

"Well....."

Old Crane hesitated in his answer.

If he said that he did not notice the abnormalities, wouldn't he be admitting that his medical skills were inferior to Fang Yuan's?

But if he could detect the abnormalities but intentionally hid it from Hu Yuxu, it would be even more terrible.

"Since you are a well-known doctor, you should be very sensitive to these details and should have already detected it, shouldn't you? Why are you still hanging around with such an evil person? Where is your medical ethics? Where has it gone to?"

Fang Yuan was harsh in his words. "Medical ethics are the most important for a doctor! If a doctor is talented but does not have the medical ethics, you will only bring suffering to others even if you are the most powerful doctor in the world!"

"You....."

Old Crane, who previously looked like a superior doctor with his long beard, was now blushing in embarrassment; his fingers were trembling.

Indeed, the purpose of his visit was to actually embarrass Fang Yuan.

However, he didn't expect to meet such a cunning lad who didn't even question his medical skills, but his medical ethics!

In fact, this was what Fang Yuan wanted to achieve.

Fang Yuan had nothing to fear even if they were to question each other's medical skills. However, why should he follow his enemy's plan to put their medical skills against each other?

They could not blame Fang Yuan for tarnishing their reputation as they were the ones who had provoked Fang Yuan first!

"And for Elder Han, you agreed to help him? Mind if I ask you, what did you do? How dare you to brag without shame? How could you treat a patient's life so lightly? Doctors should have the care and concern for their patients just like how parents have for their

children. Where is your care and concern for Elder Han? Or maybe you don't have it in the first place?"

Upon hearing what Fang Yuan said, Elder Han was even more embarrassed this time.

He was even more afraid than embarrassed actually.

Indeed, Old Crane simply glanced at Elder Han and estimated that Elder Han could recover fully under his treatment in 3 months. How confident was he about his estimation? After all, no doctors in the sect were able to treat Elder Han and Shi Yutong even had to ask the alchemy master for help.

"Doctor Fang, don't be angry!"

His life was still more important than his pride.

He was thick-skinned and replied, "I knew the principle of being faithful to one. How could I ask someone else to treat me halfway during my treatment under you? Not to mention whether Old Crane's medical skills were good or not, even if he was a powerful doctor, I would still want to be treated by you, Doctor Fang!"

"You...."

"All of you!!"

His sentence was so harsh, making Old Crane furious and speechless. Suddenly, he spat out a mouthful of blood and fainted.

"Oh? This is bad!"

Fang Yuan saw what happened to Old Crane and shook his head. "Your medical ethics and tolerance are no good, how could you even become a doctor? Even I feel ashamed for you!"

Elder Han's eyelids twitched upon hearing what Fang Yuan said.

Old Crane thought he could embarrass Fang Yuan. Little did he know that he would lose even before the fight. Plus, his reputation was tarnished and he was deeply embarrassed. It would be very hard for him to face anyone now!

"Enough!"

Zhang Sheng drew out his sword and raised his voice.

"We shall not discuss further regarding Old Crane's medical ethics. I am sorry that we have caused much disturbance and trouble in this visit. We shall take our leave!"

Knowing that their mission was a failure, Zhang Sheng did not say much and instructed Ah Da and Ah Er to carry the fainted Old Crane. All of them left in embarrassment.

"Zhang Sheng is a well known martial artist in Cangshui County. He had mastered the Tumultuous Nine Sword Technique and is also an 11th Gate Martial Artist 11th Gate....."

Elder Han said as he saw the group of them leaving.

"Oh? Are you suggesting that I should have attacked them? I am a doctor and not a fighter....."

Fang Yuan patted his chest and act as if he was very scared of them. "Elder Han, you are also an 11th Gate martial Artist. I shall leave it to you to help me and find a chance to humiliate them back?"

Elder Han shook his head with a forceful smile when he heard Fang Yuan's request.

Even if he were to recover fully from his injuries, he was still an elder of the Spirit Returning Sect and it was a serious consideration to provoke another [Martial Artist (11th Gate)].

He could only feel that Fang Yuan was too profound to be understood.

Fang Yuan laughed and consoled Zhou Wenwu with a few words.

In fact, he would likely be inferior to Old Crane if one was to compare both of their medical experiences and skills.

However, Fang Yuan's shocking magical energy aided him. Furthermore, he was a [Martial Artist (11th Gate)] and was

extremely familiar with Yin and Yang. Thus, Hu Yuxu could not hide his secret from Fang Yuan.

Fang Yuan not only verbally attacked them but also used an underhand method as well.

'The dao of spiritual knights is impressive indeed. With a little influence from a dream master and some combination with the Blood Magic Manual, in certain situations, it is even more useful than a 10th Gate martial artist.'

Fang Yuan nodded his head and was satisfied with how he handled the situation.

"Since the two of you are here already, why not just come in and have some tea!"

Without another word, he went back into the valley. "Also, Zhou Wenwu, I am lacking a few servants here. Please help me find some clever ones!"

"How could I disobey your orders?!"

Zhou Wenwu was happy as he knew he was even closer to Fang Yuan now, making Elder Han envious of him.

If the news of servants needed at Fang Yuan's place spread, the big families in Qingye City would not hesitate to send their children here as servants.

Fang Yuan of the secluded valley seemed to have become the strongest influence in Qingye City.

"Among these servants, there better be some farmers who have the experience of taking care of spiritual plants!"

There were no more secrets in the secluded valley. There were a few acres of Vermillion Jade Rice and a bamboo growing. There was not much left to be revealed as Fang Yuan had already shown off his abilities.

"Spiritual plants?"

Elder Han's expression changed as he heard what Fang Yuan said.

Fang Yuan restrained his expressions and said, "It was pure luck that the few acres of Vermillion Jade Rice were able to grow. I will have to thank your sect for giving me as a gift to plant it!

"Vermillion Jade Rice? And a few acres of it?"

Elder Han widened his eyes.

It was true that the Vermillion Jade Rice originated from the Spirit Returning Sect and many families in the county did plant it. It was difficult to grow them in small amounts as it could exhaust human and material resources easily. The land used to plant the spiritual plant would have to be changed every few years as the planting of spiritual plants would make the piece of land infertile in a few years.

How then was Fang Yuan able to grow a few acres of the Vermillion Jade Rice?

'Or maybe the spiritual land is right here?'

Elder Han's expression changed and observed the surroundings of the secluded valley carefully. He then shook his head and thought, 'No....the land here is probably very fertile, but it is astonishing to grow such a good amount of spiritual rice here!'

'Or maybe Fang Yuan has a secret method specifically for growing spiritual rice?'

Elder Han's suspicions of Fang Yuan grew and he glanced at Fang Yuan. A thought then came into his mind. 'What a coincidence he is opening up the secluded valley and hiring servants. It is a good time for me to investigate!'

This was one of Fang Yuan's purposes.

He sealed the secluded valley away from the public so others would try to guess the secrets of it.

Fang Yuan was taking this chance to reveal part of the secluded

valley so as to clear some people's suspicions.

There was a big difference between a low-profile talent who could become powerful all of a sudden and another who had a poor background but rose up to become powerful by eating spiritual rice every day.

He wanted to divert the attention to the secluded valley so that they would overlook the secrets in the Clear Spirit Mountain.

When Elder Han saw that the few acres of the Vermillion Jade Rice grown here were in better condition as compared to the ones that were grown back in the sect, he could not believe his eyes.

"This is impossible! Impossible!!!"

He squatted and looked at the fertile land, as though he wanted to taste it.

Unfortunately for him, Fang Yuan had not added any spiritual fertiliser. Even if Elder Han had brought back a few samples of the soil to test, he could only conclude that the soil was normal and fertile.

After he sent a shocked Elder Han away, Fang Yuan asked Zhou Wenwu to stay behind.

"Yes, Master!"

Without the presence of any outsiders, Zhou Wenwu became slightly stiff.

"You have done well today!"

Fang Yuan sat down while crossing his knees and nodded his head. "However, your cultivation level is.....low!"

"That is because I am incapable!"

Zhou Wenwu blushed.

He had consumed the spiritual rice daily and his inner power had reached its peak level. However, he did not know what he was

lacking and therefore could not make a breakthrough.

"The 6th Gate is also known as the Pain Gate. Breaking through this gate will be the defining moment for many martial artists. Once you make this breakthrough, your inner power will be converted to inner force!"

Fang Yuan glanced at Zhou Wenwu and said, "If you want to rebuild the Zhou family's name and reputation, being a 5th Gate martial artist is not enough!"

The current situation in Qingye City was different from before. An inner power martial artist would not be able to control a situation on his own. Similarly, Zhou Wenwu was not able to handle the situation on his own.

While perturbed, he was stunned when Fang Yuan served him a cup of tea. "Drink it!"

.....

'If a martial artist wants to break through to attain the 6th Gate, one has to accumulate their Essence, Spirit, and especially one's magical energy. As one breaks through higher gates, the requirement of one's magical energy will also be higher.....'

Fang Yuan clearly knew that Zhou Wenwu's accumulation of his inner power had reached the peak level for a [Martial Artist (5th Gate)]. However, Zhou Wenwu was still young, and his magical energy was slightly low. Hence, he was stuck at the 5th Gate. He did not want to risk making a breakthrough as he would be seriously injured should he fail.

Fang Yuan's cup of tea would solve his problems.

Also, Zhou Wenwu was stuck at the 5th Gate for quite a while and there could be a possibility that he would make a breakthrough by chance. With this cup of tea which Fang Yuan could use against Zhou Wenwu, Zhou Wenwu would not say a single word.

Chapter 83: Evolve

"Chirp! Chirp!"

In the open sky, the Iron-tailed Black Eagle flew higher and higher, and finally became a small black dot.

"Keke!"

The Flower Fox Ferret waved its paws around. Its progress of recovery was halfway, and it seemed excited.

"Don't worry! Nobody can take advantage of us! I will take revenge for you!"

Fang Yuan comforted the Flower Fox Ferret, smiling.

The trouble that Old Crane brought to him could not be paid back by just a mouthful of blood!

Furthermore, he was worried that the other party did not know his true strength, and they attempted to fight their way in with martial artists.

"The brothers who have broken through the Death Gate are still just on par with the Flower Fox Ferret, and both Hu Yuxu and Zhang Sheng, who have broken through the 4 Heavenly Gates, are no match for me... The Iron-tailed Black Eagle can deal with the rest!"

Fang Yuan's battle plan was simple, or even too plain, but it didn't matter!

With the flying spiritual beast, He could fight and, escape whenever he wanted to and could always be on the top of things!

Zhou Wenwu was a local of Qingye City. Even though he could not match against any of these enemies, he could stalk and get information about them within the city as easy as the snap of his fingers.

"The party did not stop at Qingye City, and went straight back to

Cangshui County?"

With this information, Fang Yuan's smile widened. "Even though they were cautious, they still underestimated my abilities and think that they could get away?"

"Chirp! Chirp!"

The Iron-tailed Black Eagle seemed to know what he meant, and with a long chirp, he increased his speed.

...

Two World Mountain.

This was the separation between Qinghe County and Cangshui County. The mountainous ridge was continuous, hilly and was like a dragon, separating the two sectors.

"Chirp! Chirp!"

The Iron-tailed Black Eagle possessed an astonishing eyesight; it noticed a trail of what seemed to be a campsite and immediately descended.

"Who would've known that they could make it this far, they are really quick!"

Fang Yuan examined the surroundings and it was full of fire pits, tents etc. His expression suddenly changed. "Something's not right!"

He went up and noticed cuts on the tents, flipped pots and bowls, and the blood stains on the ground. He became interested. "Internal conflict?"

At this point, he had no other doubts, and he opened the tent flaps.

"Whoosh!"

A pungent smell of rot filled the air, and in the tent laid two people. They were the martial artists who came that day to look for

trouble, but both of them had no signs of life.

"Dead... Poisoned?!"

Fang Yuan looked at the weird smile that both corpses had, and looked at the embers in the fire pit. He remained speechless.

"Who would've known... Someone accomplished what I set out to do!"

He scavenged the tent and found even more corpse within the tent. Accompanying the morning peace in the forest, this was a scene filled with fear.

"Seeing how it is, it seems that most of them did not see it coming and died in their dreams and the remaining ones who found out what was happening tried to retaliate..."

Fang Yuan came to the boundaries of the campsite and found even more martial artists corpses, and their cause of death, being stabbed by a weapon. There were slash marks on the neighbouring trees as well, evidence of a fight.

He closed his eyes, and it was as though he could witness the scene last night. "Only one person has the ability to poison so many on such a large scale, and that is... Old Crane!!!"

Only this doctor would know of such colourless and odourless quick-acting poison, and he would not draw suspicion to himself because of his status.

"But... Why did he do it?"

Fang Yuan was confused. "Just to cover up for his failure? Not to this extent, right?"

He only took it as a possibility; after all, anything could happen when one becomes crazy.

It seems that the rational madman could only do so much.

Following the tracks forward, Fang Yuan's eyelid twitched.

"One skilled martial artist escaped... This is retaliation!"

In front of him was two corpses with their heads split open. The wounds were inflicted by a sword.

"Zhang Sheng's Tumultuous Nine Sword Technique?!"

Fang Yuan twitched his eyebrow. "Did Old Crane go crazy? To the extent of harming Zhang Sheng? Or was he forced to?"

He understood everything once he noticed the imprint on a tree trunk; it was that of a palm.

"Iron-tailed Black Eagle!"

He called for it and quickly leapt on its back. "Follow this trace, and search the campsite for clues! Don't give up anything suspicious!"

...

"Nine dragons strike!"

In the woods, Zhang Sheng was pale. His clothes were tattered, and the sword in his hands swung about; the only thing that was visible was nine streaks of flashes, as though the galaxy was upside down and flowing down.

"Puff!"

He was fighting the two brothers who broke through the Death Gate, Ah Da and Ah Er. Witnessing his attack, both of them went pale and tried their best to fend off the attacks.

"Whoosh whoosh!"

Two distinct sword slices were heard. Both of them were in disbelief and fell to the ground. Each of them had a cut half an inch on their forehead.

"Puff!"

Zhang Sheng kept his sword. He looked uncomfortable, and suddenly spat out a mouth of black blood.

At this moment, a sneaky shadow pounced towards Zhang Sheng, and a claw landed on his abdomen.

"Pang!"

A loud sound was heard and Zhang Sheng flew backwards, not knowing how many ribs he had broken.

"Hehe... Zhang Sheng, your 'Hunting Dragon Technique' is indeed impressive and can surely reach the Wu Zong level. To be able to withstand until now even though you were poisoned is a testament to the ability of your technique, and you can even kill Ah Da and Ah Er, I respect you for that!"

The assailant had a decent look, with evil in his eyes; it was Hu Yuxu, the one who was scared away by Fang Yuan.

"You gave him a claw on his abdomen, and therefore he is useless now!"

A voice came from the side, and Old Crane slowly appeared. Looking at Ah Da and Ah Er's corpse, he frowned. "Why didn't you attack earlier? I took a lot of effort to train these two subordinates!"

"This person's sword technique is too powerful at first. If I did not take advantage of his negligence for defence while fighting, I wouldn't have confidence to hit him in one strike!"

Hu Yuxu became surprised.

This was because Zhang Sheng wielded his sword and stood right back up!

Even though his condition looked bad, his legs shivering, he still stood up straight like a javelin!

"Why?"

He looked at Old Crane and forced those words out. Every single word he said took a tremendous amount of effort.

"My fellow friends and I look up to you, which was the reason

why I agreed to help you. So what if we lost? Do you need to come to this point, to mix around with these kinds of despicable people?"

Zhang Sheng could not believe what he saw, and stared at Hu Yuxu, as though he wanted to kill and torture him.

The Three Heroes of Cangshan, the Guo Brothers, and the Flowery Sword... Every good soul in the team, all their smiles seemed to appear in front of him.

"Why? Haha... You martial artists act like you listen to my uncle but disobey him behind his back, and caused his setback. Don't you think that is a huge crime on its own?"

Hu Yuxu snickered and continued. "Not just the few of you! Don't forget about that Fang Yuan and everyone else who was in the secluded valley that day! I will not let a single one of you off!"

"You guys did not die here, but died in the hands of Fang Yuan at the secluded valley, and all of you were also being ambushed by the Spirit Returning Sect!"

"Everyone in the secluded valley cannot run away!"

Hu Yuxu treated Zhang Sheng as though he was dead, and rattled on casually, letting out more information.

Old Crane frowned but did not say anything.

"Un... Uncle?!"

Zhang Sheng's eyes widened, then shook his head. "So this is the relationship between the two of you... It seems that you, Old Crane, are aware of his wrongdoings and act like nothing happened, is that right? Who would've known that the both of you would be in cahoots? To think that I thought Doctor Fang was wrongly insinuating you that you have no ethics, and now it is clear that you are the lunatic!"

"Say whatever you wish to say!"

Hu Yuxu smiled and said. "After today, you will become a ... dead

person! Furthermore, based on my uncle's reputation, who do you think they would believe?"

"You thief!"

Zhang Sheng was furious. "I will haunt you as a ghost!"

"Ah... Zhang Sheng, I initially did not want to bring you into this!"

Old Crane finally spoke.

His face was full of pity. "All because you did not want to follow instructions like Ah Da and Ah Er, and also that you knew too much of our secrets. If you live on, it would be my biggest worry..."

"Old thief!"

Zhang Sheng lashed out. "Was I blind at the beginning..."

"Carry on! Carry on!"

Hu Yuxu focused his inner force onto his palms and went forward. "I didn't like you from the start, and now I shall send you to Heaven!"

Zhang Sheng struggled and wanted to retaliate but to no avail. He was poisoned, and was tired from the many fights, and was subsequently ambushed. He was like a burnt-out match and was standing there with his last breath.

Even if Hu Yuxu didn't kill him, he was unlikely to survive through the night; he couldn't even move a finger now.

"Pa! Pa!"

At this moment, a distinct clapping sound travelled from the woods.

"Who's that?"

Hu Yuxu retreated and was on high alert. He had the look of death, as though he was not going to let anyone off alive.

"Remarkable! Remarkable indeed!"

Fang Yuan slowly appeared from the dense woods, and he jokingly said. "Who would've known that I could witness all these just by casually strolling through..."

"It's you!"

Old Crane was shocked and shortly after, he turned fierce. "Fang Yuan from the secluded valley!!!"

From his tone one could tell that he had extreme hate for Fang Yuan and wanted to boil him alive; even Fang Yuan was confused himself as to when their hatred for each other escalated to such a level.

"Haha... You could have survived, but you chose death by coming here!"

Seeing that Fang Yuan was alone, Hu Yuxu was shocked, then started laughing maniacally. "Tell me, how would you like to die?"

"Why do some people think that they are too compassionate?"

Fang Yuan waved his hands and a white flash appeared from the forest. "Flower Fox Ferret, this is for you!"

"Keke!"

Seeing its enemy, it was raging.

Seeing that the person who injured him was just in front, the Flower Fox Ferret turned into lightning and pounced on him.

"You beast!"

Hu Yuxu shrieked and knew that it was powerful as he had fought the Flower Fox Ferret previously. He took out a jade sword from his hips and defended himself.

"Alright, Old Crane. Don't we have a score to settle for ourselves?"

Fang Yuan looked at Old Crane mockingly.

Chapter 84: Some Rest At Last

"Fang Yuan, you're pushing it too far!"

Seeing Flower Fox Ferret dragged Hu Yuxu away unrelentingly while Fang Yuan continued to advance continuously, Old Crane was panic stricken. He stepped backwards and shouted out.

"I'm pushing it too far?"

Fang Yuan snorted mockingly, "You took the effort to travel all the way here to disturb me. When you did not achieve your objective, you even devised a deadly trap and tried to trick me. How dare you say that I'm the one pushing it too far?"

"Shoo!"

As he was talking, he sped like the wind and circled Old Crane a few times before coming to a halt by the side.

Old Crane's face turned ghostly pale. His hand shivered and a few bags of medicine fell to the floor as he stuttered, "You...have broken through the 4 Heavenly Gates?"

Even though he knew that Fang Yuan was a highly skilled martial artist with an unrivalled inner force, he never thought that Fang Yuan was such a formidable martial artist!"

Fang Yuan was not even past 20 years of age! Yet he was so proficient and outstanding in both medicinal abilities and martial prowess to the point that it was completely unbelievable!

"Do not forget that I am also a medical practitioner. Those moves you have will not work on me!"

Fang Yuan wriggled his nose and shook his head slowly.

Even though Old Crane was also trained in martial arts like him, he was probably only around the 5th or the 6th gate. How could he possibly be a match for Fang Yuan?

As for attempting to use poison on Fang Yuan, Old Crane was

simply making a fool out of himself in front of Fang Yuan who was an expert in this field.

"Ah!"

After seeing what happened, Hu Yuxu who was struggling with Flower Fox Ferret let out a shout. He threw out a Sword Flower which burst into flames in mid-air, sending rays of blinding light in all directions. He forced Flower Fox Ferret to release its grip and took the chance to escape.

"Keke!"

Seeing Hu Yuxu escaping, Flower Fox Ferret flew into a rage and chased after Hu Yuxu relentlessly with vengeance. Even though it was less powerful than Hu Yuxu and could not possibly hold him back alone, it could still get its revenge with the help of its friend.

"Choo choo!"

A gigantic black eagle descended from the sky through strong gusts of wind and blocked Hu Yuxu's escape path. Brandishing its razor-sharp talons, it charged towards Hu Yuxu.

"Yin yang Sword!"

Hu Yuxu's expression changed. He thrust his sword in its direction. The Yin and Yang energies flowed along the blade of the sword, forcing the airborne eagle to land.

"Sou!"

At this instant, Flower Fox Ferret appeared out of nowhere within the range of Hu Yuxu's weapon and tore out his throat!

Snap!

Blood spurted everywhere as Hu Yuxu slumped to the ground. There was a gaping hole in his throat and a painful contorted expression on his face.

As he lay on the ground, his eyes were still filled with rage, as though he was still indignant that he was killed by two beasts.

"What a great spiritual bird!"

Seeing Iron-tailed Black Eagle, the colour drained from Old Crane's face. It seemed like he knew his end was near.

He looked at Fang Yuan deeply and thought, "Not only is he highly skilled in martial arts, he even has spiritual beasts. What impressive achievements! I am ashamed beyond measure..."

"Sigh...I never thought that after all these years, I would actually die here!?"

After saying this, he dropped to his knees without hesitation. A smile appeared on his face and his breathing halted instantly.

"Oh? Did he commit suicide?"

Fang Yuan stepped forward and checked for Old Crane's breathing from his nostrils. His mouth curled into a mocking smirk. Suddenly, he forcefully jabbed his index finger onto Old Crane's heart with lightning speed.

"Pooh!"

With a dull thud, Old Crane's lifeless body fell to the floor like a wooden log.

"It doesn't matter if you are really dead. I will give it to you if you are able to survive after I destroy your meridians!"

Without looking at Old Crane again, Fang Yuan walked towards Zhang Sheng.

At this point in time, the two spiritual beasts who just neutralised Hu Yuxu returned together on either side of Fang Yuan. It was an impressive sight.

"Cough..."

Zhang Sheng spat out fresh blood which contained some parts of his internal organs and asked cynically, "Is the divine healer here to kill me?"

"Oh? Why would you say so?"

Fang Yuan frowned.

"Old Crane has many connections. You would probably think twice before killing him. But seeing that you treat your spiritual eagle and true martial prowess with such secrecy, it seems that killing a person who has witnessed them would be the only way to keep these secrets. And for that reason, I too must die right?"

Zhang Sheng chuckled scornfully, "Anyway, even if you do not kill me now, I would still die by the end of today!"

"True, your core elixir is broken. Even if you do not die, you would be handicapped for life!"

Fang Yuan surveyed Zhang Sheng's injury. Nodding his head, he asked, "What if I am able to save your life and help you keep your martial prowess?"

"What?"

Fang Yuan's question kindled a fire within Zhang Sheng which shone through his eyes. This caused Fang Yuan to chuckle silently.

It was natural for all living things to have a desire to live. It was hence natural for a martial artist to desire to continue living.

"And what would you have me do?"

Zhang Sheng was no doubt a street-smart and intelligent person as he immediately thought about what Fang Yuan wanted in exchange.

"I will save your life and help you keep your martial prowess. In return, you will work for me for 20 years. What do you think?"

Even before Zhang Sheng and Old Crane embarked on their journey, Fang Yuan already did a background check on Zhang Sheng. He understood quite a bit about Zhang Sheng. Zhang Sheng was an extremely skilled martial artist who was reliable and had an impeccable character.

If not for Zhang Sheng's impeccable character, Fang Yuan would have killed him without hesitation.

"Work for you for 20 years?"

Zhang Sheng was slightly puzzled. Then he laughed and asked, "Aren't you afraid that news of today's incident might leak out? Or I might just leave you halfway through the 20 years?"

"Do not worry, I trust you!"

Fang Yuan generously waved Zhang Sheng's negative suggestions away. On the outside, Fang Yuan seemed cavalier, but in reality, he had already made the necessary considerations.

In the first place he had no intention of hiding the fact that he killed Old Crane so it did not matter to him if the news were to spread out or not.

Even though a known doctor like Old Crane would have connections to several important people, people were rational, and it would be more beneficial to gain the favour of a living divine healer than to avenge a dead one.

Fang Yuan refused to believe that many martial artists would fight him to avenge Old Crane when he could possibly save their lives one day.

As for the possibility of Zhang Sheng breaking the deal, it was even more unlikely unless Zhang Sheng was willing to endure humiliation and shame to his name in the future.

Furthermore, Fang Yuan was very experienced with managing his subordinates. An excellent example was Zhou Wenwu who was now respectful and compliant towards Fang Yuan.

The addition of Zhang Sheng did not seem to be a problem for him.

After all, Fang Yuan was a Martial Artist that had broken through the 11th gate. Taking Zhang Sheng under his tutelage was a worthy

investment.

'There is a need to have someone to guard over this valley in the meantime. Even though Zhou Wenwu just broke through the 6th Gate, his military prowess is still far from a satisfactory level. Having just him to guard the valley alone is insufficient...'

Fang Yuan sighed in his mind and then asked Zhang Sheng, "Make up your mind now!"

"You mean...I have a choice in this?"

Zhang Sheng joked bitterly.

If he rejected the offer, he would definitely die by nightfall!

"Great, you will have yourself to thank in the future for making the correct decision!"

Fang Yuan stepped forward and applied acupuncture using his golden needle. He then took out a green fruit and instructed Zhang Sheng, "Eat this!"

"Crunch!"

Zhang Sheng obeyed in a docile fashion. When he felt the bamboo fruit dissolve and flowed to his intestines, he asked in a surprised tone, "It's a spiritual item?"

"Haha...If I am only capable of doing things like saving lives, wouldn't it besmirch my glorious reputation as the divine healer of the secluded valley?"

Fang Yuan laughed and hoisted Zhang Sheng onto the back of Iron-tailed Black Eagle. He said, "Take care and you shall be back to your normal active state within a few months!"

...

The news of Old Crane's death did not spread out immediately. His corpse was only discovered several days after he died. When it was discovered, it created quite a bit of anguish.

Of course, it was just intensified emotions that's all.

There was not even a need for evidence for people to identify the famous doctor in Qingye County as the person who defeated Old Crane. As for the martial artists from Cangshui County, they mostly made passing remarks about Old Crane's death before continuing with their lives.

This was exactly as Fang Yuan predicted. Nobody would care about the death of this divine healer.

"Of course...Old Crane knew many people indeed. There would definitely be some fools amongst them who would seek revenge for him!"

At this time, he was in the valley and he instructed Zhou Wenwu, "Be more vigilant. If you see martial artists looking like they are here to seek revenge, expand all means and kill them on sight! Show them no mercy!"

Although these people were coming to seek revenge, they were also honourable people. Fang Yuan killed their friend or relative so it was reasonable for them to do so.

"Yes sir!"

The fires of passion shone through Zhou Wenwu's eyes brightly. He had successfully broken through the Injury Gate and achieved his dream of becoming an expert in inner force.

If Old Man Zhou had such powers earlier, the Zhou family would have long dominated Qingye City and even Central Song.

As his martial arts prowess was improving by leaps and bounds, he was immensely grateful and respectful of Fang Yuan. He was determined not to let him down.

Zhou Wenwu was very clear that Fang Yuan could help him improve so much and he could definitely also cause him to lose his powers.

Hence, whatever Fang Yuan demanded of him, he made sure he tried his best to deliver.

At this point, there were new additions to the staff in the valley. The lady chefs were judiciously selected. They were very well-known culinary experts in Qinghe County. As for the new servant girls, they all looked incredibly gorgeous and had extremely gentle and demure behaviours. As for where they came from, Fang Yuan did not even have to ask to know the answer.

Of course, what caught his attention was not the girls, but the man who was always sweeping the floor within the mansion grounds.

Of course, this was Zhang Sheng!

His Dantian was broken and all of his cultivation lost, causing his head of hair to turn white overnight, with some traces of old age appearing as well.

Fang Yuan was tending to Zhang Sheng on a consistent basis in an attempt to help Zhang Sheng reaccumulate his energy and strength as soon as possible. As for the martial arts capabilities Zhang Sheng once had, he could only rely on himself to train and get them back.

Zhang Sheng was also a ruthless man. Seeing himself in such a pathetic situation, he changed his name and took a new identity as a servant. He swept the floors daily and also allowed others to treat him like a common servant.

Fang Yuan guessed that Zhang Sheng's first reason for doing so was because he was ashamed that he had lost his martial arts powers. The second reason was that Zhang Sheng had numerous enemies and was afraid that they would bring trouble to the valley and Fang Yuan if they had known his whereabouts. He was indeed an honourable gentleman.

Fang Yuan held this sort of people in high regard.

Loyalty was the important virtue that a leader would look for in his subordinates.

Of course, if the subordinate was very capable and loyal, and did not create problems for his leader, it would be an ideal and perfect scenario.

'Considering his martial arts prowess, I am confident of handing over this secluded valley to him in the future!'

A servant girl approached Fang Yuan with a smile on her face as she went up to offer him some tea. Fang Yuan waved his hand and sent her away without even noticing the pain from rejection in her eyes. Alone, he walked to his training room.

Now that everything has settled down, it is time to sleep!

Chapter 85: Impudence

"Ping!"

It was as if he had fallen from a great height. Fang Yuan trembled and open his eyes.

"Life is but a dream. It's a good thing that I'm self aware..."

Fang Yuan did a visual sweep of his surroundings. Darkness. Rocks. It looked like the bottom of a deep gorge. He could not help but laugh.

"To think that after entering my dream this time, I could become self aware immediately!"

Usually, when people entered their dream world, it was extremely difficult for them to become self aware. Even if they did, it remained a one-off thing. The fact that Fang Yuan was able to do so was testament to his massive improvement in skill.

"Hmm...this is..."

Fang Yuan saw a puddle of blood and mud next to him, and faraway shouts coming from the cliff above. Fang Yuan looked at his own body, and understood.

"Isn't this still the world from before? Even following the point in time?"

Due to him having tested the passage of time, Fang Yuan was relaxed and ignored the mess beside him. He kneeled with his legs folded beneath him, and considered his current situation.

"Usually when people dream, the experience is a bizarre and unpredictable one. It is the same for novice dreamers. But I am different! My first dream world is so stable! The world actually has an intact system in place?"

This world was a product of imagination, and even carried with it a sense of absurdity. But on the surface, it was able to run by

itself and had natural laws in working order. This was a huge improvement!

According to Master Wenxin's writing on the Jade Scroll, for an average dreamer to create a relatively complete dream world, it would take a few years' worth of hard work!

"This...it is either I'm prodigious, or it is because Master had already given me some pointers regarding cultivation in the dream world."

"Still, an imagined world is ultimately a make-believe one. All the so-called power systems and paths to immortality are bullshit! No one in Qinghe County would fall for it, not even the low level martial artists of the 3 Prosperous Gates!"

Since everything was an illusion, how would there be any sign of realness?

Fang Yuan reminisced the exercises devised by the Green Cloud House, and found it very amusing.

"As the dream world gradually increases in realism, the rules also have to mirror those in reality...this is a big project. To me, this is a fantasy!"

Fang Yuan tilted his head to one side. He was no longer conflicted. He looked around him before climbing upwards, tracing an opening in the wall.

The slopes were steep and the wind cut like knives. Fortunately, big and thick vines lined the rock walls. They had weathered the elements and were as strong as metal chains. They supported Fang Yuan's weight easily.

"Whew..."

When Fang Yuan had scaled the cliff, he huffed and immediately shook his head.

"Although i can't change the look of the world, or increase my

level of cultivation, there is no doubt that I 'exist'. This is my dream world, I am the owner. Even though my authority is severely limited and I have to refresh my state of being, I can sustain my own existence!"

"Now...I should try to influence my surroundings, then finally change the world!"

"That damned method of breath training. I still need to use it for practice!"

It was easy to attempt immortal cultivation in the World of Qianyuan. One simply had to be in good physical shape, and use their celestial blood to absorb the spiritual energy. In this way, one could surely advance and succeed in building a solid training foundation.

Initially when his real self was lost, the setting Fang Yuan gave himself was 'Trash Celestial Meridian', without any ability to sense spirit energy.

But now?

Following his thoughts, a gust of wind blew, and small strands of refreshing aura were pulled towards him, guided into his body through the back of his neck, and straight into the spine.

'Whew....'

After a while, Fang Yuan open his eyes and exhaled a foggy breath.

"Spirit Energy Training Stage Tier 1, complete? Why does it feel so similar to the 12 Golden Gates? Also, it has absorbed much of my knowledge, and memories of the other world..."

"Not sure how good the settings that I had given myself are. Can I be compared to the prodigies?"

Fang Yuan was among the Green Cloud Mountains, where the House was. The place had an abundance of spiritual energy.

After he had completed his Spirit Training, Fang Yuan could not bear to leave. He let himself enter a meditative state again.

"Huff"

A slight breeze. A white mist materialised and gathered as it floated towards Fang Yuan.

The so-called 13 Tiers of Spirit Training were child's play to him.

Level 2!

Level 3!

Level 4!

In a flash, Fang Yuan had advanced five tiers, and had reached the Middle Stage of Spirit Training.

"This seems pretty average to me?"

Fang Yuan rubbed his arm, speechless.

"It seems like in my subconsciousness, the magic of the immortal cultivators in this world does not have a spectacular effect on physical growth. The more important things are the royally issued spiritual talisman, spiritual curse and magical weapon!"

"Senior Liu, it's here!"

Suddenly, lights flashed from above. A group of people rode past on a flying object shaped like a giant leaf. They were the jerks from atop the cliffs.

They had spied Fang Yuan as well, and were turning red with rage.

"This Fang Yuan is the one who killed the Young Marquis. You have to help us deal with him!"

"Senior Liu, do be careful. This person is very strange. He had lost an arm previously, and I have no idea how he recovered. What a monster!"

"Even if this person survives a fall down the cliff, and gives off

weird vibes, who cares? Our senior Liu Zhou is a gifted individual who has already completed his Spirit Training and is very close to accomplishing the Demonic Wind Technique. With his celestial body and a 397th Mainland Immortal Ranking, his future is limitless!"

"Huff"

The magic artifact fell onto the group. From above came a suave looking youth with sharp features. His green robes fitted him very nicely and seemed to emit a soft glow.

He had a princely air about him, which used to arouse a sense of inferiority in Fang Yuan. However, Fang Yuan was perfectly composed this time. He seemed totally uninterested.

"You are Fang Yuan? I am Liu Zhou! My peers have accused you of killing the Little Marquis of Hanhai by pushing him off the cliff. All that remains of him is a bloody mess. Do you plead guilty?"

The youth frowned upon seeing Fang Yuan. He had noticed that this bum was somewhat different today.

Especially after he had climbed up from the bottom of the cliff and seen the remains of the Little Marquis. Fang Yuan was not in the least remorseful, which made him all the more unreadable.

"Does it matter whether I plead guilty or not?"

Fang Yuan laughed. He found this very interesting indeed.

‘Everything in my dream is in fact a reflection of what is going on in my subconsciousness. In other words, to conquer the dream world,...I have to retract my base emotions, be in control of my true self and cultivate my mind?’

"You..."

Liu Zhou narrowed his eyes. He suddenly realised that Fang Yuan was a real threat.

He could not see any hint of fear on Fang Yuan's face. This was impossible.

A normal youth would give off uneasy vibes after being caught doing something unpleasant. When threatened with the laws, they would break in the end.

The youth before him was an exception. He maintained a cool look, as if the people surrounding him were insignificant bugs, as if he was the master of the sect!

That's right! It was exactly this feeling!

Liu Zhou's eyes gleamed. His hatred for Fan Yuan was increasing by the second.

"How dare you! Surrender yourself!"

As he roared, a jade sword flew out from his sleeves. The magical artifact slithered through the air like a snake and gave off a lethal glow.

"Magic artifact!"

"A real magic artifact! A flying sword!"

A few low level disciples exclaimed in amazement. It was entirely unexpected that their Senior Liu would use such a valuable item against a common wastrel like Fang Yuan.

"Hmm? This man intends to kill?!"

Fang Yuan was feeling the effects of the magic artifact.

He felt the weight of mountains crashing down on him, and the malevolent aura of the flying sword calling out for his blood. Still, he could not resist smiling coldly.

"He feels that I have slighted him and his ego is hurt?"

Fang Yuan felt a murderous rage coming.

If Fang Yuan had been in the Qinghe County of the real world, he might have held back. However, at this moment, he laughed out

loud.

"You are as lowly as an ant, and yet you dare to come at me with the intent to kill. It seems like the Green Cloud House will be awash in blood because of you people!"

The art of cultivation required a mastery of the mind.

At this point, it did not matter if he went against the whole world and the immortal realm. It was but a dream!

"There are too many restrictions in the real world. The martial artist will have their souls clouded. How can we get around this?"

Fang Yuan had a sudden revelation.

"In the dream world, everything is up to me. I can kill and burn as I wish. If I choose to do good, I could become the Buddha of a thousand households. If I choose to commit evil, I could bring about the end of the world. This is the best place to cultivate one's heart!"

Fang Yuan had resolved his thoughts, and charged at Liu Zhou without any more hesitation.

"Hmph! Dumbass!"

Liu Zhou's features twisted into a sneer as Fang Yuan pounced towards him.

How could a mere mortal deal with someone who had already completed his Spirit Training, and had magic artifacts and spiritual talismans at his disposal?

"Jade sword! Kill!"

Liu Zhou pointed at Fang Yuan, and the flying sword shot towards Fang Yuan at a ferocious speed, leaving a green trail of light in its wake. It had pierced through Fang Yuan's chest.

"Poof!"

A hole was punched into Fang Yuan's chest amidst a cloud of

blood and flesh.

But Fang Yuan did not even crease his brows. He had full control of senses and felt pain at only the lowest degree. He went up to Liu Zhou.

"The Black Sand Eagle Palm!"

"Ping!"

Liu Zhou flew backwards after receiving a blow from Fang Yuan. Fang Yuan paused, a curious look on his face.

"You...you devil!"

Liu Zhou climbed to his feet painfully and looked down at his shimmering robes. He was actually afraid.

"What the hell are you?"

Even the cultivators of the Golden Pill Stage would not have escaped unscathed if they had a hole punched into their chest.

Liu Zhou no longer saw Fang Yuan as a mere disciple. To him, Fang Yuan was now a terrible monster that would not die!

"A defensive magical equipment?"

Fang Yuan looked at his right hand and muttered to himself.

"To think that I actually have such a setting. I was really looking for trouble..."

As Fang Yuan sighed, he walked to Liu Zhou's side.

"Ahh...stay away from me!"

Liu Zhou backed away quickly from the vile man who was immune to spiritual items and magic. He was after all more frightened to see a spiritual aura emanate from Fang Yuan's hand.

"Magical artifacts have limits too!"

Fang Yuan ignored the havoc that the flying sword was wrecking. It did not matter how many times the sword cut into him for he

could recover instantaneously. He focused at the task at hand instead, landing continuous punches on Liu Zhou's magical robes.

"Click"

Finally, Liu Zhou's magical robes were torn apart as he looked on with absolute terror. Fang Yuan immediately took the opportunity to smash in his head.

Chapter 86: Immortality

"Hooo hooo..."

There was only the sound of the gentle breeze in the dead silence.

A few junior disciples of the Green Cloud Sect looked on and stuttered in disbelief.

"Senior Liu Zhou?"

"Ah! Senior Liu is dead..."

"How? Isn't Fang Yuan a useless bum?"

"Fang Yuan is no longer the useless bum we knew. He is now an undefeatable demon! His existence only brings disaster. We have to report this to the elders immediately!"

"Fang Yuan...we will have our revenge!"

...

"Idiots!"

Fang Yuan rushed forward and stepped onto the Gigantic Leaf Magic Equipment. With just a thought, he easily seized the rights to use it.

Looking around, Fang Yuan saw that apart from the few followers of the young master, there were still a few infamous and despicable ruffians left. Fang Yuan killed them without hesitation and took their valuable possessions before flying off on the Gigantic Leaf Magical Weapon.

"Liu Dan's reactions are too slow, and he doesn't seem experienced enough in wielding the weapon..."

Soaring high up in the sky with the weapon was an experience on a totally new level for Fang Yuan.

At this moment, Fang Yuan gazed at the bright and shiny flying sword and the magical robe he stripped off from Liu Dan's dead

body. He was silent in thought.

Liu Zhou's magical power was in fact impressive, but he was not an experienced fighter. This was especially evident when he restricted himself when he concentrated on his magical power defending himself while also using the flying sword to cover himself. This proved to be too much for him to handle as he did not have enough energy left to use the Gigantic Leaf to flee in the end.

Otherwise, if Liu Zhou had taken the chance to attack Fang Yuan when he held the advantage, Fang Yuan would probably be unable to defeat him so easily.

"This magical weapon is indeed excellent... but what use does it have for me?"

Fang Yuan then experimented controlling the flying sword, causing him to smile happily with a childlike glee. After a while, he contentedly tossed it aside.

"So, what is the use of giving me a sacred weapon!? Even though I can use it against gods and deities, it has almost no use in the human world, how is it even useful to me?"

For a dream master to cultivate his abilities, he made use of the imaginary to supplement reality, displaying his powers.

Master Wenxin could actualise things in his dream world into reality. He could actualise spiritual lands, and even spiritual beasts and lands that were millions of years old. It was truly an amazing and unrivalled ability.

As for Fang Yuan, he could not even bring a single stalk of grass into the real world, much less immensely powerful spiritual equipment.

"Using the fake as a mean to cultivate in the real world, the more realistic the laws, the greater the likelihood of things inside being actualised!"

Fang Yuan muttered to himself, "If one were to construct an imaginary world based strictly on the laws of the real world, there is a possibility it might be beneficial for one's breakthrough in the future. But for now, my abilities are not at the level that can handle the mysteries behind this ..."

The set of skills Master Wenxin passed on to Fang Yuan had several levels. As of then, Fang Yuan only mastered the most basic of them and was already thoroughly impressed and in awe. He could not help but feel more excited about what was to come.

"Bang!"

Just as the Great Leaf Magical Weapon shakily brought Fang Yuan out of Green Cloud Mountain, an explosion thundered out. Fang Yuan felt there was someone or something burning with fiery rage hot on his heels. A voice shouted out, "Thief, stop in your tracks!"

A tremendous spiritual force which contained demonic wind energy crashed into the Green Leaf Magical Equipment. This collision caused it to wobble unsteadily and with its internal system in disarray before it finally crashed to the ground.

"Sou!"

As the magical Weapon crashed to the ground, Fang Yuan leapt up and nimbly landed on the canopy of an old tree by the side. Without looking at the collision, he turned his attention to the furious person charging towards him and thought, "An immortal cultivator from the demonic wind period? What is he here for?"

The main focus of the world was to cultivate to become an immortal.

After completing the 13 Tiers of Spirit Energy Training, one could explore the world and seek out a demonic wind energy that was suitable and absorb it. From there, the cultivator would have unimaginable abilities for the preparations to develop of the

Golden Pill of Dao in the future.

The better the demonic energy, the more substantial and strong the Golden Pill would be. This would make the Golden Pill of Dao all the more worth looking forward to.

If one's pill was able to reach the Grade 1, one was almost guaranteed to shatter his pill to form an elemental infant, split and evolve his spiritual will, and eventually undergo heavenly tribulation.

"Roar roar!"

At this moment, Fang Yuan was chased by a great bluish-black ball of demonic wind energy. It took on the shapes of a dragon and tiger, creating a rancorous noise. This could thoroughly shake an immortal cultivator to his core.

"This is a Dragon Tiger Demonic Wind, which is the most inferior kind of demonic energy and it is extremely sparse. It looks like it is a deacon that has no hope of forming a pill in his lifetime..."

With just a glance, Fang Yuan figured out what that was.

Even then, as an immortal cultivator, it was not to be underestimated. It caught up with Fang Yuan in a blink of an eye and transformed into a ferocious and well-built middle-aged man. He looked similar to Liu Zhou, except that his bloodshot eyes were filled with rage it looked as though he could not wait to swallow Fang Yuan whole. He barked out, "You are the one who killed my nephew?"

"Who would have thought one could fly around in the Demonic Wind Stage in human form? This is so convenient!"

Looking at this man, Fang Yuan remarked eagerly.

In this short period of time, Fang Yuan's martial arts progress was also on a roll. He broke through several gates successfully and had already reached its full completion.

Although Fang Yuan did not take this middle-aged man seriously, the middle-aged man could no longer contain his anger and shouted, "A demon from another world?! Or are you an ancient demon from the Savage Period?"

"Up to you to decide!"

Fang Yuan waved his hand and the Sky Blade shot out. It charged towards the middle-aged man like a green sea dragon.

"Zhou'Er's Sky Blade?! To think that his imprints were removed so quickly?"

Upon seeing this, the middle-aged man exploded in anger. Without even using a weapon, he directly tapped his head and shouted, "Go!"

"Roar roar!"

With a thunderous roar, the demonic wind in the shape of the dragon tiger which was circling around him launched itself with lightning speed and trapped the Sky Blade within.

"I do not care what sort of demon you are! You killed my nephew, you will pay for it with your life!"

Seeing that the Dragon Tiger Demonic Wind had already countered Fang Yuan's flying sword, the middle-aged man's confidence was bolstered. He opened his mouth and shout out a small seal. The seal expanded rapidly in its path mid-air, turning into what looked like a small black hill.

"Dragon Tiger Seal, destroy!"

Pointing at Fang Yuan, the magical weapon which now looked like a small hill came crashing down instantly.

Bang!

It caused a tremendous tremor in the ground and loose particles and debris flew up into the air. The trees toppled down one after another.

In just one strike, anything that was in the location where Fang Yuan once stood had sunk several metres deep into the ground. Nothing was spared.

"What a great magical weapon with remarkable power! It seems to match your demonic wind quite well?"

In a flash, Fang Yuan reappeared. He began laughing and applauding.

He deduced that this person's demonic wind was in fact very weak. But because he had the magical weapon, it made him rather formidable. This explained why he was courageous enough to chase after Fang Yuan.

"Erm? He's not dead?"

The middle-aged man was shocked. He just witnessed the area where Fang Yuan once stood got hit by his weapon on target. He had believed that there was no way Fang Yuan could have avoided that.

"You are no doubt extremely unpredictable, but your demonic wind abilities do not seem impressive, why should I fear you!"

Gritting his teeth, he made a gesture with hand and the two dragon and tiger demonic winds abandoned the flying sword and merged into the seal.

"Ow ow!"

"Roar roar!"

With this reinforcement, the seal's power increased tremendously. With the eyes of the two beasts shining menacingly, the seal headed straightforward Fang Yuan's head again.

As Fang Yuan contemplated his next move, he could already feel the sheer power of the force from the magical seal. It exerted a pulling force on him, restricting his movement.

"Bang!"

The magical seal crashed on Fang Yuan's head, causing his body to be smashed into a bloody and gruesome mess.

Just as a smile appeared to take shape on the middle-aged man's face, it quickly turned into a contorted look of shock and disbelief.

In a flash, Fang Yuan was again standing at his original location, looking as though nothing happened to him at all.

"How is it possible?"

The middle-aged man's expression changed. With a wave of his hand, several shiny and eye-catching magical weapons appeared. Axes, pitchforks and so on now charged towards Fang Yuan.

"Ha! Holy Combination of Dragon and Tiger, Flooding Water and Burning Fire, Golden Winds and Smothering Earth! Activate!"

With this incantation, all these magical weapons dropped from the sky, evolving into many unthinkable forces and landing on Fang Yuan.

"Bang!"

"Bang!"

By this point in time, the hill had already endured several lethal, destructive and disastrous attacks. Not only was it completely overturned by the Dragon Tiger Seal and other magical weapons, it was devastated by the several spells shot out by the middle-aged man. There was almost no chance of survival for any organism living in it.

However, one could not say there was definitely no chance of survival because Fang Yuan stood perfectly unharmed in the centre of it.

"Enough?"

Fang Yuan yawned restlessly and looked at the middle-aged man.

"No.....impossible! Even if you are an ancient demon, it is still impossible! This must be a trick! An illusion!"

As the middle-aged man muttered, he forcefully executed a few moves on himself to confirm that he was not hallucinating. With this confirmation, the blood drained from his face and with a shout of despair, he flew off without turning back.

Even though he had yet to avenge his nephew, Fang Yuan proved too formidable and intimidating for him.

"It was so boring to be attacked the whole time!"

Being on the receiving end of the middleman's offensive moves and being smashed to pieces so many times, Fang Yuan's anger had built up steadily. How could he let this man off easily?

"Now that he has escaped, how do I chase after him? Even though the Green Leaf Magical Weapon seems great, it definitely cannot outrun the Dragon Tiger Demonic Wind!"

Fang Yuan shut his eyes as he thought of a solution.

All of a sudden, the energy on his body began the breakthrough, even causing a large disturbance in the heaven and the earth. Small strings of demonic wind energy automatically appeared, and after he refined them, he entered the Demonic Wind Stage in that instant.

"Let's go!"

Riding on the demonic wind, Fang Yuan was flying in his human form. His speed increased tremendously and caught up in no time.

"This is...demonic wind? This creature has advanced into the demonic wind stage?"

The middle-aged man turned around. When he saw Fang Yuan, he felt as though his soul was sucked out from him. "Furthermore, it's the Dragon Tiger Demonic Wind? Holy, what has this world become? Could he accomplish this just by merging the demonic winds? Could he be the son of God?"

Thinking about how he sacrificed almost everything to search

the whole world to master just a bit of the demonic wind, and the excruciating experience from it, immense rage and unfairness overwhelmed his heart. It could even almost swallow him whole.

"This creature is too terrifying, I cannot fight it!"

He already had no intention to avenge his nephew, all he thought of was to escape and hide from this creature for the rest of his life.

"Sou sou!"

Two lines of demonic winds cut through the sky, moving extremely quickly.

Suddenly, the sight of the buildings on the grounds of Green Cloud Sect came into sight. This caused a delightful smile to appear on the middle-aged man's face. He shouted, "Help me master!"

"You think just because you are back here you are safe?"

Fang Yuan momentarily entered a mysterious realm.

All that he had seen previously caused him to enter an advanced level of enlightenment. He suddenly widened his eyes and shouted, "Die!"

As he shouted, the middle-aged man in front of him's look of extreme delight changed drastically.

He instantly felt that he lost all his abilities and he was falling from the sky like a bird without wings. The look of pure terror plastered his face.

"Bang!"

A pool of blood splattered on the boulder. This expert from the demonic wind stage fell to his death.

Chapter 87: Extermination

"That shout sounded like it was from Brother Liu!"

"He went off to kill Fang Yuan. Maybe he met Fang Yuan when he shouted?"

"Who dares to go against us, the Green Cloud Sect in Heaven's Element?"

"Sigh.....unfortunately Liu Zhou is dead. If not, he would be able to defeat the enemy!"

.....

The long shout from the middle-aged man shook the entire Green Cloud House. A few flashes of light then appeared and thoughts ran wild. What everyone saw next was unbelievable.

"Oh my god! What have I seen?"

"Brother Liu fell to his death!"

"Are you kidding? How can a True Cultivator in the Demonic Wind Stage be able to fall to his death? There had been no such absurd accidents in the whole of the cultivation world!"

"But that person is really Brother Liu and looks like he has failed in his cultivation!"

"Could it be that we are under some illusion spell?"

A few other Demonic Wind Stage True Cultivators rubbed their eyes and couldn't believe what they had seen.

"Which powerful person dare to intrude Green Cloud House?"

"Bang!"

3 giant streaks of light rose from within the Green Cloud House, revealing a white-haired old man accompanied by two middle-aged men who were in the Golden Pill Stage and Elemental Infant Stage respectively. The rest of the True Cultivators bowed down to them

and greeted. "House Master, Deputy House Master!"

"I am Yu Xiong, may I know your intention for intruding our place and killing our deacon?"

The white-haired Elemental Infant Period House Master looked stern and stared at Fang Yuan.

The House Master understood what he saw from his spiritual will. Deacon Liu was actually escaping but when Fang Yuan made his move, Deacon Liu became a normal human being as his body disintegrated instantly.

Seeing what Fang Yuan had done, the House Master knew from his spiritual will that Fang Yuan was also in the Demonic Wind Stage and was a powerful enemy. The two Golden Pill Stage deputy house masters beside him immediately summoned their magical weapons to defend themselves.

"They are my nephews and they work in collusion with each other. They wanted to kill me, and I only acted in self-defence!"

Fang Yuan stood with his hands behind his back. He squinted his eyes and laughed. "It doesn't matter. In this world, who do I not dare to kill? Who can't be killed by me?"

"You're an evildoer!"

"You're a crazy man!"

"You're a devil!"

.....

Yu Xiong looked at a few other house masters and deacons in the eye and knew that they would not let this matter go.

"House Master, Fang Yuan is one of the disciples in our sect. He had always been dull and seemed stupid. I'm not really sure how he has become like this....."

At that moment, a deacon reported to Yu Xiong about Fang Yuan.

"A disciple of ours?"

Yu Xiong was surprised.

To him, a few disciples that were still training were still higher skilled than him.

However, after seeing what Fang Yuan could do, he was confused. "Could he be possessed by a demon from another world or is he the reincarnation of some ancient demon?"

Yu Xiong then said, "No matter what, if we let this devil escape today, there will be misery and suffering in future. All disciples listen up, make a Green Cloud Array!"

"Yes, House Master!"

A few bright flashes were seen going into the building under the leadership of the two house deputy house masters.

"Bang!"

Suddenly, a green fog then appeared in the Green Cloud House and it formed an array which surrounded Fang Yuan.

"This is your array? Interesting!"

Fang Yuan stood firmly and saw the changes around him. An attack array was surrounding him, piquing his interest.

Previously, he had made minor amendments to his body with just his thoughts. However, he still had to follow a sequence in order to improve and at this point was only at the Demonic Wind Stage.

After all, the cultivation in this dream world was just an illusion and it could not be transferred over to his real life.

'One can only blame my logical thinking skills? To create such a world that has become so tight in terms of security? And even taking me as an enemy?'

Fang Yuan understood the power that he possessed as the 'creator' of the dream world.

The reason was that in this dream world, only he was real and he was the bridge connecting the real world and the dream world. Hence, objects or people near him, or within the influence of his thoughts, would be affected by the laws of reality in the real world.

That was why Deacon Liu became a normal person and fell to his death when Fang Yuan attacked him just now.

"Unfortunately..... My attacks are still limited! Nevermind, it might improve after I gain more experience!"

Fallen trunks surrounded him as he was thinking.

The Green Cloud Array consisted of 5 rows that rotated constantly. It would transform with time and as time passed, the power of the array would be increased, eventually forming an extreme five elements array.

"Fallen trunks.....I don't want to get squash to death....."

Fang Yuan looked the incoming giant trunks and touched his chin. He thought of something and shrouded himself in his power.

"Bang!"

At that moment, many trunks and vines trapped him.

"Kacha! Kacha!"

Many cracks appeared before exploded.

Among the mess, Fang Yuan came out unharmed.

"Clang!"

Suddenly, a giant golden blade formed right above Fang Yuan, making a clanging sound as it landed on his neck.

The golden blade broke in half as it landed.

"Rumble! Rumble!"

The Green Cloud Formation changed again and this time, there were flames.

Fang Yuan took a deep breath and breathed in the flames. Satisfied, he let out a burp. "Old Yu Xiong, any more tricks? Just show all of them to me now!"

"This....this...."

Yu Xiong, who was hidden within the formation was surprised. "Physique cultivation? Was this an inheritance from the Savage Period?"

Seeing Fang Yuan charging straight into the formation with the intention to break it, Yu Xiong had to take action.

"Let there be wind and lightning on my command. Activate!"

Yu Xiong was, without a doubt, an expert immortal cultivator in the Elemental Infant Stage. With just a command, the surrounding was suddenly filled with strong winds and lightning. A green lightning descended and struck Fang Yuan.

"Peng!"

Fang Yuan was motionless. There was only a hint of green smoke emitting from his shoulders and his clothes were still in good condition.

"Oh lord, is his body made out of magical equipment?"

Yu Xiong was frightened. The Elemental Infant inside him suddenly appeared on his chest. He then shouted, "Green Cloud Sword!"

"Rumble!"

The whole formation shook and the green cloud started to fade away. It then converged above Yu Xiong's head to form a figure of a giant green sword.

"Execute!"

Under Yu Xiong's command, the giant green sword fell straight towards Fang Yuan like a collapsing mountain.

Above the sword, lightning flashed and the wind howled. The surrounding 5 rows of light converged to become a remarkable spiritual technique and flowed along the blade of the sword!

Miles away, flocks of birds started to fly away and many wild animals fled as though a catastrophe was about to strike.

This sword was dominating and powerful!

"Mighty House Master!"

At that moment, everyone, be it the disciples or the Golden Pill Stage deputy house House Master, were all cheering for the house master as though they had witnessed the devil being killed by the mighty sword.

"Whoosh!"

The sword then came crashing down.

"Buzz! Buzz!"

The ground shook and a giant crack appeared on the ground. A giant cloud of dust was formed from the crack.

"Hoo, hoo....even though this looks fierce, the Green Cloud Formation will kill the enemy in one strike without any pain or suffering.....uh...."

Yu Xiong exhaled a long breath.

In the epicentre of the explosion, there were cracks everywhere, but one portion of land was perfectly preserved, untouched. This portion of land stood out among the destruction.

On that perfect portion of land, a person stood firmly on the ground, unharmed.

That person was holding a green sword in his hand as well.

"This.....this is impossible!"

Yu Xiong exclaimed and retreated. "Are you an old fogey in the Tribulation Stage? If not, how are you able to control the perfect

sword essence as if it is nothing?"

"Perfect sword essence?"

Fang Yuan smiled and went forward with the Green Cloud Sword in his hand. "To me, this sword is as soft as a paper. I can knead it into anything I like!"

"You.....are a devil!"

Yu Xiong was furious and shouted. "All the disciples in the Green Cloud House, we shall work together to fight against our enemy!!!"

While he was speaking, his Elemental Infant had become a small golden sword and it flew through the thin air. It was a clever way to call for help.

"House Master!"

Among the shouting, a few bright lights flashed to the front. "With our help, we shall defeat this devil!"

"Idiots!"

Fang Yuan laughed and waved his hand lightly.

"No!"

As Yu Xiong gave a horrified look, Fang Yuan struck the Green Cloud Sword out, and released the sword essence, increasing his fear factor.

"Whoosh!"

5 bright lights shrouded the Green Cloud Sword as it crashed down towards the main hall of the Green Cloud House.

"Bang!"

Even though the range of his attack was not as wide as before, the sword essence that Fang Yuan possessed was the main essence of the array

, destroying the main hall.

Yu Xiong and the 2 deputy house masters spat out mouthfuls of blood and were all seriously injured. There were a few unlucky deacons who didn't manage to survive.

"Stop calling me a devil. Can't you address me properly by my name?"

Fang Yuan came towards Yu Xiong and glanced at the group of people who once considered themselves the 'immortal ones'.

"What should I do next? Kill all of them?"

Fang Yuan questioned his conscience.

If his conscience told him to kill, then he could even destroy the whole world!

"Hold on a second.....are....are you Fang Yuan?"

Among the crowd of disciples, one person walked out, with fear written all over his face. Fang Yuan could recognise him as the deacon who introduced him to the Green Cloud House.

"Hehe... There is karma even in the dream world?"

Fang Yuan laughed and gave a serious look. He went near Yu Xiong and said, "Karma is too complicated. I'll settle everything with one sword!"

"You..."

Yu Xiong was in shock. An Elemental Infant appeared on his head as it wanted to escape.

"Drop!"

Fang Yuan laughed and exclaimed.

"Pa!"

His Elemental Infant fell onto the ground like a doll, motionless. Fang Yuan walked up and squashed it with his foot!

Chapter 88: Death from the Roar

"To be lost in the world, and realise it was but a dream... I can do anything I want, for I am the only real thing here!"

In his laughter, Fang Yuan left the Green Cloud House, which once pinned high hopes on him. His shadow disappeared, and only the raging fire was left behind.

Not long after he left, the spiritual fire engulfed the entire Green Cloud House and turned everything into ash, a few spiritual lights were seen from the horizon, and almost instantaneously moved to the area above Green Cloud House.

A few high-levelled immortal cultivators were enraged after witnessing this scene.

"What guts! What guts!"

An old man with a child's complexion chuckled. "You dare to oppose the Green Cloud Sect? Even though you might be an ancient demon, we will still destroy you!"

"Nine days of rain, pour!"

A pretty lady twitched her eyebrows, swung her willow branch and formed a downpour, which extinguished the fire. "Based on Yu Xiong, although the ancient demon might seem to only have harnessed the Demon Wind, he cannot die and be destroyed as his body is extremely tough. You'd better invite a few more senior brothers proficient in seals and arrays to help out!"

"That is right! I, an immortal cultivator, am the owner of all things, what have I not experienced? I have even dealt with and killed more than a hundred extraterrestrial and ancient demons, one more should be no problem!"

If Fang Yuan was here, he would be able to sense the anger from these immortal cultivators!

This was the confidence that they had gotten over many past victories!

"What's more... Brute force! Cannot be destroyed?"

An old man with his eyebrows and beard as long as flames licked his lips and his eyes glittered with excitement. "If this is true, this demon is a top-grade material for making magical equipment! It might even be able to fend off a few 99 Wind-Fire Tribulations!"

At the mention of this, even the expressions of those Magic-splitting, Magic-melting and Magic-fusing experts' expressions changed, revealing their greed on their faces.

To enter the Tribulation Stage, going through the 99 Wind-Fire Tribulations was a must, and it was not just once, but once every century.

It was fine if one barely scraped through it; if one failed, he would likely die, which was a fear among those in the world of immortal cultivators!

Even though they are high up in the hierarchy of the Green Cloud Sect, they still have a phobia of the life-threatening Tribulation; they would gather all the magical weapons they could, just to increase their chances of making it through the Tribulation.

After hearing what the weapon smelting elder had to say, everyone started to think for themselves.

....

"Everyone will punish this demon!"

Amidst the shouting, an immortal cultivator of Elemental Infant Stage thrust his sword, An impressive atmosphere was produced as the sword's afterimage and the swordlight fused together to become one

"Chi la!"

This swordlight which had the ability to divide mountains and

separate rivers landed on Fang Yuan, but what came off was only a little spark.

Without even a frown, Fang Yuan struck his claw out. The colourful light on the body of the immortal cultivator was destroyed as if it was a bubble and a palm-sized elemental infant was dragged out.

"Ah... My body... Demon!"

A small elemental infant witnessed the destruction of its own body, and even the strength of the elemental infant seemed to disappear; it became a defenceless doll with fear in its eyes. "This is impossible... How did you capture my elemental infant?"

An elemental infant was the fusion of one's Essence, Spirit and Magic at their peak after the Golden Pill was smashed. It had a visible shape but was actually not made of any substance. It could naturally possess supernatural powers, teleportation, possession of another body etc.

But to Fang Yuan, the elemental infant was like a real infant; it could not defend itself. This moment scared the hell out of this immortal cultivator.

"It's from the Green Cloud Sect again..."

Fang Yuan held the elemental infant and had a tinge of annoyance in his eyes.

After the Green Cloud House was burnt down, he immediately became the common enemy of the immortal cultivator world and was hated by everyone. Many others left their mountains and were all after him.

Even though a cultivator at Tribulation Stage was right in front of him, he routinely crushed him effortlessly; he wanted to let everyone know that even though he was almighty, he would still be irritated by pests.

"This time, I would solve the problem entirely!"

With one breath he destroyed the elemental infant. Fang Yuan looked out to the mountainous ridge, looking curious.

This was the sacred mountain of the Green Cloud Sect, and the top spiritual ridge of the entire Heaven's Element; it was well known even throughout the entire world.

The main mountain ridge of Green Cloud Sect laid here.

"Demon!"

"The ancient demon is here!"

After Fang Yuan killed the elemental infant, he did not stop and continued to trespass the sacred land of the Green Cloud Sect. A large golden bell on the top of Green Cloud Sect's bell tower was struck eighty-one times, and it shook the earth.

It was as if the entire Green Cloud Sect was like an awoken spiritual beast, roaring.

"What audacity!"

"A small demon, but you dare to oppose Green Cloud Sect?"

A few streaks of light shot out; a group of angry old cultivators came out, staring at Fang Yuan, as though they wanted to smelt him on the spot.

"Ah... It's the Magic-melting Cultivators that are here!"

"And the weapon smelting elder too!"

"With us around, the Green Cloud Sect can eliminate this animal, and we might even be able to smelt him into a precious weapon!"

...

Outside, many streaks of light were visible. They were the Demonic Wind, Golden Pill and Elemental Infant stage Cultivator, and were all brimming with confidence.

"You want to smelt me?"

Fang Yuan felt rather amused after hearing them and looked at

the weapon smelting elder. "The Green Cloud Sect is too much, and you deserve to be destroyed..."

"Destroyed?"

The weapon smelting elder was confused, as though he had heard a huge joke, and started to laugh hysterically. "The Green Cloud Sect had many hidden secrets. We not only have more than 10 masters who have passed the Tribulation Stage, we also have the protection of elders in the Immortal World. You are just a small demon who knows a simple indestructible divine technique, and yet you dare to say such words?"

As he laughed, his expression became fierce. "Even if you are indestructible, the Green Cloud Sect can still suppress or seal you away. Don't you worry, I will then personally extract your soul and use your body to create a magical equipment!!!"

"A bunch of id*ots!"

Fang Yuan grinned from ear to ear. "You dare to boast in front of me? Come down!!!"

"Rumble!!!"

After sensing the entire dream world, He became increasingly familiar with changing the surrounding environment.

The result of that was an invisible vibration that came from his voice, engulfing the old man.

Horried, the weapon smelting elder lost all his magical strength, shrieked and fell down from mid-air.

A few other elders were met with same fate.

"Pa! Pa!"

Blood stains were everywhere on the ground.

These few elders were not simple-minded; they prepared magical weapons and spiritual talismans to defend themselves, as such, they would still be able to use them immediately even if they were

unable to focus their magical power.

Notwithstanding that, the weapon smelting elder trained in secret techniques even smelted several pieces of hard magical weapons into his own body, making his body strong as steel. Even if he were to jump into a mountain of knives or a sea of flames, he would be able to survive. A fall from such a height would mean nothing to him!

But it was still useless!

Regardless body or magical weapons, everything became like glue and exploded as it touched the rocks.

Even their elemental infants lost their ability to leave their bodies. They could only witness themselves falling to death and were squashed with their physical bodies!

Silence!

There was dead silence at the gate of Green Cloud Sect.

The silence was so deafening that a large number of Green Cloud Sect disciples witnessed the scene in shock.

"What... What did I just see?"

After a long moment, a female disciple clad in pink robes rubbed her eyes. "So many Magic-melting elders, and the Magic-fusing weapon smelting elder, and they all just died with a roar?"

That's right! To all these disciples, they had just witnessed a demonic roar; the few elders who were all so proud before instantly fell down from shock became melted and died from the roar!!!

"It seems that the effect is not too bad! And I have positive control over it!"

Fang Yuan approached the melted bodies and came close to the gates of Green Cloud Sect.

"Ah! He's coming!"

"Leave quickly!"

"Save me!"

...

Seeing a demon who was able to kill so many highly skilled cultivators approaching, the Green Cloud Sect disciples fled like a flock of birds, extremely embarrassed; they had lost the pride of being the number one Sect.

"Hong! Hong!"

After all of them had retreated, a high pitched bell rang, and the ground shook.

Fang Yuan leapt and looked down. The entire sacred mountains of the Green Cloud Sect came alive and gathered at the Green Cloud Sect gate to fuse... It fused into the shape of a large green dragon.

"They could suck the spiritual energy from a hundred miles of the entire sacred land to form this large defensive array?"

Fang Yuan looked at the eyes of the dragon, and felt that there was much hatred in it; it was as real as a human's expression, which shocked Fang Yuan a little.

"To break through this array, one must destroy the spiritual vein and the earthly energy over a hundred mile radius protecting it... Other than recruiting the help of an immortal that has already ascended, or gathering a group of immortal cultivators in the Tribulation Stage, there aren't any other options!"

Fang Yuan nodded his head and took a few steps forward.

Within the Green Cloud Sect, an old man in green stood in front of the gate and appeared serious; he was the Green Cloud Sect Master!

"This demon is too scheming, it is not even afraid of the Green Immortal Dragon Array! It seems like I will have to set up a

spiritual seal array!"

He glanced at a middle-aged man who seemed to be of a high level of cultivation. "Also, I will need your help to deliver this letter to the Grandmaster's Hall!"

After his words, he threw a piece of green jade that was emitting spiritual light.

"Roger!"

Focused, the middle-aged man knew that the Sect Master had little confidence in the sect and had to use his final move; to get help from the Tribulation Stage Grandmasters!

Chapter 89: Tribulation

"The first step for the cultivation of a dream disciple is to be self-aware and then try to achieve that in every dream world!"

"The second step will be then to try to control the dream world!"

Fang Yuan strolled on in high spirits. Within him, the dragon and the tiger combined and produced a Golden Pill.

The Golden Pill was round, bright and shiny. At the same time, there was a sense of indestructibility of the pill. When it formed, it created such an impact that shook even heaven and earth. The elemental energy from it formed a small funnel and the auspicious energy transformed into a Lingzhi. Several different other transformations then rapidly and repeatedly appeared.

"This is...."

The Green Cloud Sect Sect Master almost pulled his beard off when he saw what happened. "Forming the Golden Pill?"

Every disciple in the Green Cloud Sect was familiar with the process of forming the Golden Pill.

But what they couldn't understand was that this devil who had killed many elders was not even in the Golden Pill Stage!

A person's words can paint such a beautiful picture! When the dragon and the tiger combine, Yin and Yang meet....Looking at this, this pill is of Tier 1 standard! One can use the combination of Dragon and Tiger in the Demonic Wind Stage to form a Tier 1 Golden Pill?

Nearby, a white-beard old man saw this phenomenon and opened his mouth widely. "The combination of spiritual dragon and spiritual tiger in the Demonic Wind Stage is not the last in the list of the Heaven and Earth Demonic Wind but it can form a Tier 1 pill? And.....there is tribulation in there?"

Many of the disciples had the same question as the old man.

They looked up and saw that the phenomenon was fading away. They could see a clear blue sky but there was a feeling of messiness.

Every step an immortal cultivator took, there would be tribulations accompanying him.

Especially when one entered the Golden Pill Stage, he would get a sense of the evil in this world for the first time; the 99 Wind-Fire Tribulations!

Even though this was the lowest level in the 19 Tribulations, it could cause immense sufferings to an ingenuine cultivator and he would have almost no chance to survive unless he had the help of his magical equipment, allies, arrays or help from the sect.

What was happening?

A devil was forming a Golden Pill right in front of the Green Cloud Sect, skipping the process of going through any tribulations.

"Why am I not as fortunate as this devil?"

The Sect Head of Green Cloud Sect witnessed the phenomenon coming to an end. He gave a serious expression and stared at Fang Yuan. "This devil has a very powerful energy and is likely to be strongly related to the tribulations..."

Look at this, it made him rethink about the concept of human consciousness as his confidence shook.

"It's just a Golden Pill, that's all!"

Fang Yuan was in a trance. After being aware of what was happening, he approached the Green Immortal Dragon Array.

"Hou! Hou!"

The Green Immortal Dragon Array looked at Fang Yuan and let out a long cry before sweeping its gigantic body across.

It was huge like a mountainous ridge and the energy it dissipated seemed to have come from the earth. As it shook its tail, the entire physical Green Cloud Sect came crashing towards Fang Yuan.

Even an expert in the Tribulation Stage had to focus and be cautious when in such an intense situation.

However, Fang Yuan yawned a few times and slowly stretched out his right hand.

"Rumble! Rumble!"

His right palm appeared normal and was similar to any other palms. When compared to the Green Immortal Dragon Array, it was like a grasshopper using its arms to block an oncoming car.

Astonishingly, the next moment surprised many disciples. His right palm could actually counter such a destructive move completely!

'In reality, no matter how significant the things are in this dream world, they are just illusions....'

Fang Yuan sighed and grabbed the fog coming from the Green Immortal Dragon Array with his right hand, pulling it forcefully.

"Kacha! Kacha!"

There was a snapping sound as though a rope was under tension before giving way.

The Green Cloud Dragon let out a loud roar of displeasure and its body compressed towards Fang Yuan. It was unable to control itself anymore.

At the same time, the spiritual energy in the Green Cloud Mountain was dissipating.

"Is....is he cultivating the spiritual dragon?"

The Green Cloud Sect Master was left in complete shocked and could feel the impending destruction of the Green Cloud Mountain. His eyes became bloodshot. "We cannot allow him to

destroy our sect's foundations. Kill him!"

A red long sword appeared and flew straight at Fang Yuan.

At that same moment, the elders, the deacons and the disciples of the Green Cloud Sect also executed their magical equipment, including flying blades, steel forks and axes, pagoda shields and horse carriages.....these weapons were unique and filled the sky.

Fang Yuan did not flinch a single bit as he encountered all these magical equipment.

The next moment, he was overwhelmed by these weapons like raindrops pelting on a leaf.

"Kacha!"

The magical weapon of the Sect Head of Green Cloud Sect was considered the most powerful among all. They were made by forging 9 Days Mystical Metal and 10,000 Years Mystical Ice over Heavenly Flames for 81 days. The weapons formed were incredibly strong and could be used in several ways.

However, as it came in contact with Fang Yuan, it broke into two pieces!

With the weapon of his life broken, Sect Head of Green Cloud Sect turned red and spat a mouthful of blood. "This is impossible.....has this devil's body become divine?"

"Ding! Ding! Dang! Dang!"

As the Sect Head of Green Cloud Sect spat out blood, the rest of the magical weapons came falling down and disintegrated into a pile of sand as they landed on Fang Yuan.

Even the sect head's weapon was destroyed. How could the other magical equipment hold up? Some of the magical weapons were being recovered. Otherwise, they would follow in the Green Cloud Sect Sect Head's footsteps, having their lifeline magical equipment destroyed, and all of them would cough up blood.

"Keke....."

Fang Yuan laughed and blinked his eyes before breaking another two swords.

Since his body was the only 'reality' in the dream world, any type of magical weapons would not be able to harm him in any way.

Even with the overwhelming magical equipment, he was not hindered at all!

"Rumble! Rumble!"

With Fang Yuan constantly tugging at it, the Green Cloud Dragon roared in anger. It slowly shrank in size and landed on Fang Yuan's palm like a strand of noodle.

As the last straw broke, the entire Green Cloud Mountain lost its spiritual energy, ending up a normal mountain.

"Stop!"

Suddenly, a loud roar shook the ground and it revealed a shocking spiritual will. Many of the low-levelled cultivators could not withstand it and unknowingly knelt down.

"Woo! Woo!"

Dark clouds filled the sky. Thunder and lightning danced around as though the tribulation was here!

A silhouette appeared from the sky in the midst of the scary atmosphere. The silhouette's eyes were glittering and glared at Fang Yuan.

With its appearance, the lightning and thunder grew stronger.

"I, Green Cloud, send my greetings to you, Grandmaster!"

The Sect Head of Green Cloud Sect was overwhelmed with emotions and brought a few others to greet the Grandmaster.

"He is the Tribulation Stage Grandmaster who has just awaken from hibernation!"

The disciples cheered and rejoiced.

Indeed, so what if the devil was very powerful?

Their Tribulation Stage Grandmaster was most powerful in this world!

"Devil?"

The Grandmaster stared at Fang Yuan and shook his head. "This is strange.....I cannot feel any devil's energy from you. My spiritual will tells me that you are just a normal person!"

"Then what do you think?"

Fang Yuan laughed and he was fiddling with the green noodle in his hand.

The Grandmaster frowned.

A normal person couldn't possibly force the Green Cloud Sect to such a state, and was even more impossible to casually harness the entire spiritual energy of the mountains in his hands!

"I will not pursue the matter of who is in the right and wrong. I am just going to ask you a question, will you stop whatever you are doing now?"

The Grandmaster then looked at the dark clouds and said with a sense of ambiguity. "Or would you rather fight me to the death and suffer together under the 99 Wind-Fire Tribulations?"

The tribulation would destroy everyone, and could not be targeted at a specific person.

The previous few Tribulation Stage Grandmasters were not able to handle the first tribulation and feigned their deaths. In the end, they had to live their lives in hiding.

Now, with the appearance of this Grandmaster, another tribulation would be triggered!

This was going to be fatal!

After all, even if an enemy was able to defeat a truth cultivator who was in the Tribulation Stage, he would not want to be involved in the tribulation and get hurt by it.

Especially for the tribulations that were in the Tribulation Stage, if a Tribulation Stage Grandmaster were to be involved in another tribulation, he would be completely destroyed and vapourised!

After all, by the laws of the tribulations, the stronger the resistance, the more powerful it would be!

"Reconcile?"

Fang Yuan laughed and shook his head. "You immortal cultivators made many to become slaves and did all sorts of evil things to them. You all forced them to worship you. When killing them, did you all ever spared a thought for the normal human beings?"

"Of course, it would be just an excuse if you all said what you all did was for the greater good. However, most importantly.....I want to see the Tribulation Stage tribulation for myself!"

The Grandmaster who was listening to what Fang Yuan said almost spat out blood and rubbed his ears in disbelief. He looked at Fang Yuan and asked, "What....what did you just say?"

"I said....I want to feel the effect of the tribulations and I'm asking you to help me with it!"

Fang Yuan laughed, went forward and waved his hand. The green noodle was flung out, transforming into a roaring dragon's head.

"Rumble!"

The roar destroyed half of the Green Cloud Sect, leaving many disciples dead.

"This devil.....I shall fight you to death!"

The Grandmaster came out of hiding. Exploding the spiritual seal

apart, it descended and rushed towards Fang Yuan.

As he approached, the dark clouds in the sky grew denser. Heavenly wind and fire rained down relentlessly. There were also many blinding flashes of lightning that gave off a purplish light.

God's eye!

With the lightning formed from the 99 Tribulations, the Grandmaster was also injured badly!

"Pi la!"

At that moment, many eyes of lightning tribulation crashed down and sealed the whole area. Even those of Elemental Infant Stage were unable to move.

"You shall die!"

The Grandmaster was struck by the tail of the Green Cloud Dragon and his body flew out. Shortly after, he was struck by the lightning of the God's Eye. Half of his body was destroyed into pieces but his face still had a smile.

"Pi la!"

Another lightning of the God's Eye struck down and the Green Cloud Dragon roared mournfully. It was then partly annihilated and landed back on Fang Yuan's palm.

"Oh? So this is the 99 Wind-Fire Tribulations?"

Seeing the 3 lightning strikes from the God's Eyes striking towards him, and the raging heavenly wind and heavenly fire, he smiled.

Chapter 90: Feared Name

"Grandmaster..."

The Green Cloud Sect Sect Head could see that the Grandmaster's body crumbled under the lightning of the God's eye. Even the Grandmaster's magical energy started to dissipate. The Sect Head could no longer bear it and knelt onto the ground. Tears rolled down his cheeks.

"Grandmaster..."

The disciples of the Green Cloud Sect lamented. Some of them even shrank back.

The 99 Wind-Fire Tribulations was indeed too frightening!

Some of the faint-hearted disciples started to develop doubts as they thought about having to undergo the nine Tribulations after the Tribulation Stage.

"Honglong! Honglong!"

After losing the target, the storm clouds rolled back and the golden rays appeared once more.

"The Grandmaster sacrificed himself so that the Green Cloud Sect can survive. Do not ever forget this!"

The Sect Head stood up and wiped his tears away when an elder next to him pointed towards the storm, his face filled with chagrin, and said, "That...that demon...he lives!"

"What?"

The Sect Head was shocked.

He could see a silhouette in the storm.

"The 99 Wind-Fire Tribulations is nothing much!"

Fang Yuan swept the dust off his shoulders and stood up. He looked at the Sect Head coldly and said, "Looks like it was Heaven's

will for you all to become my experiment..."

"Honglong!"

He took a step which caused the whole Green Cloud Sect to shake.

The earth trembled and he instantaneously reached the Elemental Infant Stage.

"Monster!"

The Sect Head winced, "How can you still be allowed to survive?"

In his mind, he had already decided to vanquish this bane at all cost with the aid of the Mainland Tianyuan...no! With the aid of the immortal cultivators in the World of Qianyuan!

Fang Yuan was only one person!

"Honglong!"

Another tremor shook the earth.

From the ruins of the Green Cloud Sect, a dozen beams of light emerged, each one appeared to be old monsters who have reached the Tribulation Stage.

"Even that old ghost is dead!"

An old lady looked at Fang Yuan and shivered, "My illusion techniques are of no use as well!"

"Leave it to us, the three brothers!"

Three elders in yellow robes, who looked similar to each other, stepped forward. "Our skills are more useful in delaying him!"

"Not bad, the three Huang Brothers are array masters. When they work together, buying time would be no problem...we cannot let the legacy of the Green Cloud Sect be destroyed in our generation. If not, how will we be able to face our masters in the immortal world?"

The old monsters appeared to be ready to sacrifice themselves for

the sect, "If things do not go well, we need to open the immortal gate and get the help of the masters in the immortal world even if it means sacrificing ourselves!"

"Boom!"

The Huang Brothers brought out many magical weapons which caused the earth to react with a loud sound.

White fog appeared and started to form a maze, layers by layers and trapped Fang Yuan at the heart of the maze. It appeared that the three brothers knew very well that it was not realistic to defeat Fang Yuan.

It was enough to trap him in the maze. They did not dare ask for more.

"What a good array. It is indeed formidable!"

The Sect Head praised, "That demon would not have been able to easily destroy the Green Immortal Dragon Array if it was created by the three of you!"

"Hurry!"

The old lady shouted, "Don't waste the Grandmaster's effort!"

"Understood!"

The Sect Head clenched his fists. He drew his sleeves and started to lead the disciples away.

It was then when the sky darkened and ominous dark clouds appeared.

"What happened?"

The old lady exclaimed, "Who is so careless as to reveal their Disaster-level aura?"

"Kacha! Kacha!"

Thunder roared and the lightning danced across the sky. The God's eyes started to form, almost as if the deities were observing

the mortals. The sky rumbled.

"Impossible!"

The old lady let out a shriek when she saw the God's eyes descending upon the maze-like array.

"Honglong! Honglong!"

The tremendous power of the God's eyes struck mercilessly upon the array.

The whole array shook when the first lightning struck it.

It was followed by the second, the third...the lightning caused the whole array to shatter, revealing the faces of the Huang Brothers.

"Big Brother?!"

"Second Brother?!"

"Third Brother?!"

The three brothers looked at each other before turning to face Fang Yuan who was walking out of the array.

"Even though this array can be broken by other conventional means, I might as well test my abilities after gaining this new power of lightning..."

Fang Yuan smiled, "It is time to end this!"

He looked up into the sky where the black storm clouds gathered. A dozen God's Eyes surrounded the Huang Brothers. Lightning struck the three Huang Brothers and turned them into ashes.

"Damn..."

The remaining old masters and the disciples of the Green Cloud Sect were rooted in shock. The old lady mumbled, "Controlling the tribulations...is that even possible? How can someone who breaks all the rules be allowed to exist in this world?"

"He has already reached a level where he is able to effect

changes..."

Fang Yuan was satisfied with his ability to control the tribulations, "I am able to manipulate the heavens and earth. Now, I am not far off from controlling the dream world..."

He had realized now that the reason that he was able to undergo cultivation as a dream master much faster than the others was due to the fact that Master Wenxin had helped him develop a strong foundation.

"Being able to reconstruct the world, awakening my true self, and even being able to manipulate the world quickly...what I have achieved in under a month greatly outstripped those normal disciples who had been training for multiple years or even decades..."

Fang Yuan gently waved his hand.

His fingers were long and thin. After overcoming multiple gates, his hands no longer possessed any dead skin and were instead, white and tender. The power to manipulate the heavens and earth was at his fingertips.

"Kacha! Kacha!"

The sky turned pitch black.

The only colours that could be seen were from the lightning.

Green and purple lightning from the God's Eyes rained down. The lightning appeared to be alive and headed towards the disciples of the Green Cloud Sect.

"Wind-Fire Tribulations, the 39 Tribulations, and the 19 Tribulations..."

The Sect Head's face turned ashen when he witnessed the scene.

Even though the disciples at the Demonic Wind Stage and below possessed the ability to recall the lightning to a certain extent, they were unable to do so for this tribulation which was at a higher

level. For these disciples, it was certain death for them!

The sound of ten thousand lightning was indeed frightening.

Even the Green Cloud Mountain had been reduced by the lightning.

While Fang Yuan had not mastered his control over the dream world, he possessed sufficient power to throw the whole dream world into a state of unrest.

"Honglong!"

Under Fang Yuan's manipulation, the lightning tribulation in the world of Qianyuan, which had always been just, became unreasonable.

The lightning would strike anyone as long as they are the disciples of the Green Cloud Sect. Even after being struck by the 99 Wind-Fire Tribulations, the cycle repeated itself till all the disciples were dead.

"Demon!"

A change occurred just as the lightning was reducing the Green Cloud Mountain into a pile of dirt.

A thunderous noise boomed. From the nine heavens, a golden ray of light shined through and formed a richly embellished golden gate. Even the lightning tribulations were dispelled when the gate was formed.

The golden gate opened a small fraction and from within, a glimpse of the immortal world could be seen and an enraged intent could be felt.

"It's the Grandmaster!"

The Sect Head and the old lady who were struggling under the lightning tribulation could only weep, "The Grandmaster in the immortal world descended to this world for us!"

"How dare you destroy my legacy! Die!"

The golden gate opened a little more. A giant hand emerged in a beam of light and reached out towards Fang Yuan.

This was the attack of the Green Cloud Sect Head in the immortal world!

"Hmmm? Immortal?"

Fang Yuan let out a smile, "Do you really think that after enduring the 9 tribulations and rising to become an immortal, you will always remain outside the three worlds and no longer be within the five elements?"

"Dream on!!!"

"Your immortal world...is also part of my dream!"

Fang Yuan made no effort to dodge the giant hand and instead grabbed the hand and yanked!

A surprising thing that shocked all the bystanders happened.

Compared to the hand, Fang Yuan was just like an ant. No! Fang Yuan was even smaller than an ant.

However, he managed to drag the hand and the arm out of the golden gate!

The old lady's eyes widened in shock as she saw a tall and elegant elder clothed in a green robe being dragged out from the golden gate.

"Grand....Grandmaster!"

As a high-ranking member of the Green Cloud Sect, she had seen the drawing of the Grandmaster. He was true to the drawing.

"How would he be able to perform the same move in the human world?"

The Sect Head's expression was grave as he looked at the young man in front of him.

"Hmmmm...It is almost time...after I defeat you, I would be able

to control this world and improve further!"

Fang Yuan said. He looked as if he saw a delicious prey.

...

After a few days, a shocking news spread across the world of Qianyuan.

The Green Cloud Sect had been destroyed by a demon with many elders of the Tribulation Stage dead. Even the next successor in line had fallen in the hands of that demon!

The immortal world was in a state of unrest and had even given the demon a name. He was known all around as the Apocalyptic Demon!

Chapter 91: Leveling up

"Yawn..."

Qinghe County, secluded valley, within the stone room Fang Yuan used for training.

Fang Yuan stood up, stretched and looked at his own hands and legs. He chuckled. "In the dream, I am an indestructible, immortal-killing demon, but in this world, I am nothing..."

"The difference between reality and dream is scary... I've heard that some dream masters were so deeply immersed in the dream world that they forgot their true selves, voluntarily staying in the dream world..."

Fang Yuan looked solemn.

In reality, who could say that the dream world was not a real one?

Compared to just existing in the real world, the dream masters who could achieve something in the dream world were better off.

"These types of reparation are a form of escape, and I will never accept it!"

Fang Yuan took a quick glance at his stats window:

Name: Fang Yuan

Essence: 8.0

Spirit: 7.9

Magic: 4.5

Profession: Dream Disciple

Cultivation: [Martial Artist (11th Gate)]

Technique: [Black Sand Palm (Grade 5)], [Eagle Claw Iron Skin Technique (Grade 11) (Able to harness Elemental Force)]

Skill: [Medicine (Level 3)], [Botany (Level 3)]"

"Very good! This time after the dream, I was able to gain '0.4' in magical energy, and had quite a bit of dream disciple cultivation..."

He was pleased with the result. As he triggered the mechanism, the stone moved aside and sunlight poured into the room, making him squint his eyes.

"Young master!"

Outside the room stood a young servant, who approached Fang Yuan to pass him a towel.

"Little Pearl... How long have I been inside?"

Fang Yuan wiped his forehead and asked.

"One day and one night!"

Little Pearl had baby cheeks, white skin, a plump figure and looked flirtatious in her smile. He didn't know how Zhou Wenwu found this girl; she was rather thoughtful.

When Fang Yuan returned to the pavilion, a chef served a bowl of porridge made from spiritual rice and a few other dishes.

"One day and one night?"

Little Pearl scooped some soup and proceeded to feed him, while Fang Yuan remained in shock. 'It seems that time passes much faster in the dream world, and will change the rate of how fast time passes? This is a little advantage... Without reaching Wu Zong, I am able to let the elemental force nourish my body. Which martial artist would dare to isolate himself for more than three days?'

After sorting his thoughts out, Fang Yuan opened his mouth and a mouthful of porridge came.

He just had to look at the dish, and Little Pearl would get it for him; she was extremely thoughtful. Fang Yuan could enjoy the life like a master.

"Little Pearl, where are you from?"

He pinched her cheeks, which felt extremely smooth to the touch.

"I... I am from Lieyang County, and was sent by my aunt to Master Zhou's place..."

Little Pearl looked down and whispered softly.

"I see..."

Fang Yuan realised that Zhou Wenwu spent a lot of effort in selecting the servants for him, and as for how many families he destroyed, no one would know.

"Are you literate?"

"A little!"

"Very well, I will teach you a part of a magical technique, and you can pass it on to the other servants!"

Fang Yuan squinted his eyes. "The servants of the secluded valley must be different from the rest!"

With the resources he had, it was effortless for him to train and maintain a batch of martial artists. He had even prepared the Xuan Yin Heart Technique for them to learn!

This was a secret technique passed down within the Five Ghosts Sect, and could be used to cultivate up till Wu Zong, which was a testament to its potential.

Furthermore, after reaching a high grade, there might be consequences and therefore Fang Yuan was unwilling to try it out for himself; he only took parts of it to adapt, but now he finally found a use to it.

What would be the consequence?

Fang Yuan glanced at Little Pearl.

Seeing the potential of these servants, if they did not have his

help, it would be lucky for them to train and harness inner force on their own; they wouldn't think about the Four Heavenly Gates.

If the Xuan Yin Heart Technique really had the potential to break through Wu Zong, then no one in the right mind would present it as a gift.

After his meal, Fang Yuan became energetic and walked around the secluded valley.

"Good day Young Master!"

"Good day Young Master!"

...

Amidst all the greetings, Zhang Sheng was sweeping the floor, undisturbed. Fang Yuan left him alone, nodded his head, and went to the spiritual farm.

"Master Fang!"

A few farmers who were farming came over. "The Vermilion Jade Rice is growing very well, and cannot be compared with the previous farm I worked at. We are going to get a bountiful harvest soon!"

They were all sweating profusely and were jubilant at their efforts.

Of course, other than them, the guard of the spiritual farm, and the Flower Fox Ferret had their contributions too.

Although Fang Yuan did not put too much thought about these small things, he still had to guard against those who would secretly target the Vermilion Jade Rice.

Because of that, the Flower Fox Ferret stayed in the secluded valley. With it serving as a deterrence, and Zhang Sheng as a spy, no one could plot anything on the farm.

"Keke!"

Fang Yuan became speechless as he saw the Flower Fox Ferret sit at a side and instructed a servant in green to roast meat for him.

He noticed Fang Yuan and swiftly ran to his side, trying to please him.

Disregarding the spiritual tea and spiritual rice, in the heart of the Flower Fox Ferret, he preferred Fang Yuan's roast meat over the that of the servants.

He tapped his chest, as though he meant that he was hard at work making sure that nothing happened around the spiritual farm.

"You guys have worked hard!"

Fang Yuan stroked the Flower Fox Ferret's head and got everyone around the spiritual farm to gather. "When the spiritual rice ripens, everyone will get their share!"

"Thank you, master!"

The servants were jubilant after hearing this and offered their thanks.

"Hmm!"

Fang Yang waved, turned a few rounds to appease the crowd, and left the secluded valley.

Behind the mountains, the Iron-tailed Black Eagle was waiting and stared at Fang Yuan as he approached.

"Let's go! To the Green Peak spiritual land!"

Fang Yuan leapt on the back of the Iron-tailed Black Eagle and was decisive.

The secluded valley was his connection to the outside world; his real base was the large Green Peak spiritual land.

"Chirp!"

The Iron-tailed Black Eagle shot into the sky and disappeared...

...

Green Peak spiritual land, middle of the mountains.

A few straw pavilions were made out of rough workmanship, and there was a simple garden in front, albeit not well-maintained.

"The riches of this world is like a passing cloud..."

After experiencing the world and how everyone wanted to bribe him with riches, he had a totally different feeling after arriving here.

His cultivation as a dream disciple made him appreciative of nature. He came down from the eagle's back and immediately went to check on the Questioning Heart Tea and Flame Jade Rice.

Loosening the soil, fertilizing, watering... Every move was real.

After doing everything, and looking at both spiritual plants growing well, Fang Yuan sighed. "We now have a steady supply of Questioning Heart Tea, but we will have to wait for a few more seasons for the Flame Jade Rice..."

One stalk of rice would obviously not be enough for consumption. Fang Yuan was also a generous person. He would not forget the Flower Fox Ferret's and the Iron-tailed Black Eagle's share.

"Simmering the spiritual rice could damage it. I've heard that some alchemy masters can directly produce spiritual pills from spiritual rice. One pill would be able to sustain one for days, and the nutritious value would be preserved in the pill, which makes it the most efficient way of using spiritual rice..."

With random thoughts in his head, he looked at the other spiritual objects and was surprised.

"This is..."

He approached the small platform which in it planted the spiritual bamboo. He noticed a few small shoots appearing from

what was a flat ground, and one would not notice it if they did not look hard enough.

"The bamboo fruit has germinated?"

Fang Yuan was ecstatic.

In his view, a cloud of red-white smoke appeared and was absorbed by the stats window. The 'Level 3' behind [Botany] became blurred.

Under all his hard work, he had already filled the proficiency points for [Botany] to the brim and was just lacking in opportunity for him to break through.

The germination of the bamboo shoots fulfilled the criteria, like how he managed to plant the spiritual plants the previous time. The [Botany (Level 3)] jumped a little, and became '4'.

[Botany (Level 4)]!!!

Fang Yuan was filled with emotions and looked at the description:

"[Botany (Level 4)] - Your hands have now surpassed a mortal's, and through your cultivation of the spiritual plants, the chances of a special trait evolving have increased, and now there is some chance of awakening some special abilities."

"[Botany (Level 4)], indeed requires the experience of planting a high-level spiritual plant!"

Fang Yuan clenched his fist and had a rough plan to break through his [Medicine].

"Increasing in chances of special traits evolving. Does that mean that my spiritual plants now have a higher probability to be evolved?"

He thought through carefully about the description and focused on every word. "Chance of awakening some astonishing ability? What does that mean?"

The system on him was not sentient and had no mind of its own; he had to base on his own deductions, and the answer would not just appear.

The surprised Fang Yuan looked at other spiritual plants, hoping for another such thing to happen.

However, this time, only one of the many germinated.

"The growth of the spiritual bamboo may take hundreds of years... Even though I might have the spiritual fertilizer, there is only so much time I can expedite..."

Walking out of the garden, Fang Yuan sighed.

"Maybe... The only hope is to keep increasing my [Botany] Level!"

Since he could increase the chances of evolving a special trait, shortening the growth period of the plant could be a possibility?!

Fang Yuan's thoughts ran wild. If he could plant plants that require hundreds or thousands of years in a matter of years, then his [Botany] would be the top of the world!

Of course, the condition was that he had to keep his skill a secret, or cover and hide from spies.

With some motivation, Fang Yuan went to take a look at the red-eyed white kind bird.

It decided to not eat any food and became skinnier. It was pitiful, but Fang Yuan had no thoughts of releasing it. If it did not agree to be tamed, he would let it die here!

Chapter 92: Harvest

Even though the Red-Eyed White King Bird did not want to eat, Fang Yuan still had his ways to deal with it.

He could use underhand means to ensure its survival and slowly deal with it.

After all, he had no time limit, and would not lose anything by dragging on.

But it seems that he did not have to go to such extremes; he had to use death to obliterate the king bird's pride.

...

Half a month later.

"Start harvesting!"

Zhou Wenwu personally led the people, and he was filled with emotions.

The spiritual farmers all agreed and began to harvest the ripened rice.

This batch of rice was about to mature; even though Fang Yuan guarded the secret of the spiritual fertilizer closely and did not use it this time, it only delayed the period of maturity by a little.

At this moment, the entire Vermilion Jade Rice farm was filled in red. All the farmers and servants rolled up their sleeves and started to cut the rice stalks; every single rice stalk was harvested.

After working for so long in this rice field, they all knew the value of this spiritual farm.

"The harvest from this spiritual farm is more than 1300 pounds! Congratulations, Doctor Fang!"

Outside the farm, Fang Yuan stood next to Elder Han, both witnessing the harvest. Elder Han chuckled.

The Spirit Returning Sect's entire spiritual farm could not match the amount of harvest that Fang Yuan had, which made Elder Han envious.

'However... Our sect grows not only spiritual rice, but other spiritual plants as well, and therefore the secluded valley cannot compare to it... A pity that Sect Master sacrificed half of our savings on Lin Leiyue...'

Thinking of this, the stingy Elder Han felt a pain in his heart.

After the pain, he looked at the bundles of harvest and began to worry.

Even though the secluded valley only produced spiritual rice, it was still a form of spiritual plant production!

Furthermore, on such a large scale, they could be a stronghold themselves. Thinking about how he could sense the Xuan Yin Heart Technique on all the servants made him even more worried.

'Techniques, spiritual rice... Even though he only rewards those who work hard, this doctor is rather generous. If they become more developed, they will surely affect the reputation of the Spirit Returning Sect...'

With spiritual plants, techniques and rewards, this was no different from a small sect!

Furthermore, from certain angles, it might even be better than a sect.

After all, with fewer things to worry, they could escape if they wanted to.

Elder Han thought to himself. Even the direct disciples of the Spirit Returning Sect might not be able to learn such a high-levelled technique like the Xuan Yin Heart Technique, even though they might only be at Grade 6.

Not to mention the reward of spiritual rice for hard work.

'With all these... I'm afraid that these servants will be extremely loyal, and even the spies might be pulled over as well!'

If the spies working undercover were not blackmailed or forced to carry out their duties and be loyal, how many of them would be able to resist such temptations?

Unless his family members were captured, or if he did not have common sense, then he might be able to.

Elder Han looked at Zhou Wenwu, who seemed more and more like a lackey and sighed. It was as though he could see the future of Qingye City.

"What are you thinking about, Elder Han?"

Fang Yuan seemed to have detected Elder Han's silence and asked cheerfully.

"Keke... I never thought that the secluded valley would have such abundance of supplies, and was just thinking about it!"

Elder Han never thought that the Doctor from the secluded valley was one that he could work with well, especially after the news of the death of Old Crane!

"I see!"

Fang Yuan nodded his head. "I've newly concocted a few medicines. Also, you are fit beyond my expectations, and just need to rest well after my treatment. After consuming the medicine that I have prescribed, after a hundred days, you will recover fully!"

This Earth Gate test subject was of little value to Fang Yuan now. After all, he himself was already a [Martial Artist (11th Gate)], and only being a [Martial Artist (12th Gate)] or Wu Zong could satisfy his needs.

Furthermore, after getting rid of Elder Yan, if Elder Han were to get into an accident here, he would draw unnecessary attention to the secluded valley.

Shi Yutong was not a fool, she did not need evidence to have her way!

"What... This is good news, thank you, doctor! Thank you, doctor!"

To Elder Han, this was exceptional news, and he continuously thanked Fang Yuan. "Don't worry, I will order for those spiritual objects to be sent here after I am back!"

"Mmm!"

Fang Yuan did not reply, but inside he was pleased.

There was a small plot of spiritual land within Spirit Returning Sect, and there were many more species of spiritual plants there than his own collection; furthermore, there were professionals taking care of it, which meant that it might even be of better quality than those at Green Peak spiritual land.

After levelling up his [Botany], he needed experience like this to fill up his experience bar.

Furthermore, there was the special ability of a [Botany (Level 4)], which he wanted to try out.

"Master!"

After completing acupuncture for Elder Han, it was his final use of him as a test subject. He made Elder Han suffer an immense amount of pain before letting him go. Afterwards, Zhou Wenwu happily reported, "The harvest for the spiritual valley is completed, and I have personally witnessed them stored the last bag of harvest into the storage room. We have a total of 1,500 pounds of harvest, rice stalks..."

"Mmm..."

Fang Yuan brewed a cup of tea, and as he drank it he was listening to Zhou Wenwu report, and from time to time nodded his head.

Zhou Wenwu swallowed his saliva, his tummy rumbling. He did not dare to ask for a cup of tea, which left a deep impression in him.

"We have these unshelled rice, and after shelling them we would get 1,300 pounds of spiritual rice... Take 130 pounds with you, be it keep it all for yourself, or distribute it to the rest, it's all up to you!"

"Also, keep the shells, for we can use it to feed chickens and ducks next time..."

Fang Yuan casually instructed him, like a landlord.

"Yes yes..."

Zhou Wenwu agreed, but inside he was confused. "The shell of the Vermilion Jade Rice is even more nutritious than normal rice... Yet master would not let humans eat it, but feed it to chickens and ducks? Gee... I wonder how would their meat taste like once they've grown up?"

After thinking, his mouth became dry.

"Also, the rules regarding reward and punishment for the servants must also be decided!"

Fang Yuan took Zhou Wenwu as a housekeeper. "Everyone in the secluded valley can learn and break through the first three Gates of the Xuan Yin Heart Technique. As for the 2 Peaceful Gates, 3 Perilous Gates, the 4 Heavenly Gates and even the method to break through to Wu Zong, these must be kept secret and only taught when one has made some significant contribution!"

"Of course!"

Zhou Wenwu nodded his head.

In fact, after finding out that Fang Yuan had no reservations in passing down the Xuan Yin Heart Technique to the servants, Zhou Wenwu abandoned his family martial art technique and converted to the Xuan Yin Heart Technique. Even when Fang Yuan

mentioned to him the negative side effects that might be present, he still did not put that to mind.

After all, he knew his own martial arts and if he did not change to a higher-level technique, it was impossible for him to break through the Death Gate, into the 4 Heavenly Gates!

As for Wu Zong, he only dared to dream about it, and therefore was not worried about the possible side effects.

Zhou Wenwu was ultimately different from the rest of the servants; Fang Yuan did pass down to him the entire method of attaining the 4 Heavenly Gates. The spiritual rice was a great support to his intense training, and all these made him even more loyal to Fang Yuan.

After all, where could he find such a good boss?

...

After settling the minor stuff in the valley, Fang Yuan left the secluded valley, rode the Iron-tailed Black Eagle and arrived at the Green Peak spiritual land.

Other than the secluded valley, the garden here also had a supply of Vermilion Jade Rice, which he personally planted.

Based on logical sense, with the help of the spiritual land and spiritual fertilizer, it should have been matured and ready for harvest.

Only because he accidentally attained a higher level in [Botany] did he delay it until now.

As he arrived at the farm, his eyes were filled with a bright flame-colour.

He initially planted 5 sections of Vermilion Jade Rice here, and the initially healthy Vermilion Jade Rice was now withered and replaced by the Flame Jade Rice, as though it had sucked all the essence from the Vermilion Jade Rice.

"One, two, three... six, seven!"

Fang Yuan counted, and the smile on his face grew. "Seven stalks of Flame Jade Rice! Haha... [Botany (Level 4)] is indeed impressive, the chances of the special trait evolving are much higher than before!"

Without hesitation, he went up and harvested the 7 stalks of Flame Jade Rice and the remaining Vermilion Jade Rice. In a moment, Fang Yuan had a small bag of red and round spiritual rice the size of a spiritual pill.

"This is Flame Jade Rice?"

He picked up a handful and examined closely.

This rice was still unshelled, and although the bag was covering the spiritual rice, it seemed to be unable to cover its radiance.

"Although I have not seen a spiritual pill as described in the legends, I'm sure I could fool people if I bring this out!"

Dissipating his magical energy, Fang Yuan could sense the thick spiritual energy all around.

"However... I don't know about the qualities of this Flame Jade Rice. I can't feed this to the Flower Fox Ferret like how I did with the Vermilion Fruit, can I?"

Fang Yuan had mixed feelings. Food was of extreme importance to humans. He had plans to eat the Flame Jade Rice as a staple in the future and had to be more stringent in his checks and be clear of its medicinal properties in order to eat it safely.

"Other than this, I still have to investigate the properties of the spiritual wisteria and the Cracked Ice Fruit the found at the king bird's nest..."

How many spiritual objects were there in the world?

With the teachings of Master Wenxin, Fang Yuan still did not dare to claim that he had known all of it.

The spiritual plants found at the king bird's nest still did not germinate after a long time, which made Fang Yuan suspect his own [Botany] skills. He did not fulfil certain important criteria for the germination of spiritual plants and had to do some research on his own to find out on his own.

"Since the next batch of Vermilion fruits in the king bird's nest has ripened, why not take a trip there..."

Fang Yuan touched his chin.

Since the journey to Lieyang County, he had experienced the interesting world, especially the encounter with spiritual knights, which sparked interest in him.

Furthermore, the Blood Killer who died in his hands did not seem to be a simple guy Fang Yuan had to do more investigation on the Blood Killer.

"The spiritual knight who assisted Shi Yutong the other time... Who would've known that Shi Yutong could not only recruit the help of an alchemy master but also able to find such a helper?"

Fang Yuan shook his head and knew that his ability was far from those strong powers.

Chapter 93: Secluded Mountain Prefecture

It was dawn.

The rain had stopped and the air was humid. The scenery was clear.

A group of carriages were moving steadily along the wet pathway. There was a youth dressed in green and his eyes were glittering. He seemed to be excited and was engrossed in a discussion. "We will be reaching the Secluded Mountain Prefecture soon!"

"Xia country is vast and geographically, it can be separated into 3 Prefectures..... Lieyang, Qinghe and Cangshui counties belong to the Secluded Mountain Prefecture and the Prefecture City is at the heart of it. This city is way more prosperous compared to other counties and the master of the Secluded Mountain Prefecture is the most powerful in the entire Secluded Mountain Prefecture! Legend has it that he is a spiritual knight who can harness nature's elements!"

His face was flushed with excitement, as though this was his first trip away from home. With a little pride, he added. "I have a small family business in the city..."

"Haha.....Master Yu, you are too humble! How can the scale of your family business be considered small?"

Fang Yuan was dressed in a thick clothing as he rode a green donkey by the side of the carriage. He was enjoying his chat with the youth in green.

Inside, he was still displeased. 'It looks like Elder Han is still being cautious of me.....Unfortunately, he thinks he can cheat me, but he doesn't know that he is actually helping me instead....'

After Elder Han had recovered, without hesitation, he sent a few spiritual objects as payment.

However, what made Fang Yuan speechless was that even though after Elder Han had seen him growing the Vermillion Jade Rice, it was obvious that he did not want Fang Yuan to grow stronger. However, the spiritual objects Fang Yuan received from him was not a common type like the Emerald Grass. It was a Thousand Year Frozen Fruit and similar other plants which required a few hundred to a thousand of years for the plants to grow to produce their effects!

Although such spiritual plants were considered precious, Fang Yuan would probably not have the chance to witness these plants to bear fruits. He had no choice but to accept them anyway.

The amount Elder Han paid for his treatment was considerably great in terms of the spiritual plants he gave.

Unfortunately, Elder Han didn't know that Fang Yuan would be satisfied with just the Vermillion Fruit as growing it successfully would aid Fang Yuan in strengthening his [Botany].

'Of course.....to reduce the time taken for the spiritual plants to grow, the spiritual fertiliser can only help to a certain limit. I will still have to improve my botany skills. Furthermore, there's no way for me to obtain any more spiritual plants from the Spirit Returning Sect. I hope there will be takeaways from the Prefecture City!'

With that thought, he left the Flower Fox Ferret back in the secluded valley and the Iron-tailed Black Eagle back in the Green Peak to guard these places. On the other hand, he was carefree as he rode a green donkey to the Secluded Mountain Prefecture.

The trip there was relaxing and smooth, although they encountered some troubles along the way. After doing a few good deeds, he was noticed by the hired master who was passing by in a caravan. They were impressed by Fang Yuan's martial arts skills and invited him to travel together.

This caravan, which was called White Cloud, was also heading

towards the Secluded Mountain Prefecture and the youth named 'Yu Xinlou' was the hired master of the caravan. Fang Yuan hesitantly accepted their invitation under pressure and joined the caravan. Not long after, they struck up a conversation.

The Secluded Mountain Prefecture City was of a different level compared to the other counties. Disregarding everything else, the young people from the Secluded Mountain Prefecture City would be more well-informed as compared to those in the other counties.

'Even the disciple in the Spirit Returning Sect might not know about spiritual knights.....For myself, if I didn't read a few books about it, I would probably be ignorant now.....'

Fang Yuan felt slightly ashamed of himself before Yu Xinlou's voice was heard.

"Brother Fang, since you are able to achieve the 6th Gate by the age of 20, you are considered a talent in this Prefecture City. You might have the chance to get a glimpse of Wu Zong in future....."

To Yu Xinlou, being a [Martial Artist (6th Gate)] was very impressive to the point it was hard to put in words. In comparison, he himself was not even a [Martial artist (4th Gate)], which meant that Fang Yuan was way stronger than him.

"Brother Yu, you think too highly of me. There are many other powerful people in the Prefecture City. With my cultivation level, how am I considered powerful?"

Fang Yuan smiled and glanced at the old man who was riding the horse carriage.

This old man was a Martial Artist (9th Gate) and had the cultivation level of the 4 Heavenly Gates. He should be the secret bodyguard of this caravan.

As the conversation took place, the old man had been worriedly keeping an eye on him. However, he could neither tell how powerful Fang Yuan was nor could he tell that his own cultivation

level had been exposed to Fang Yuan.

'It looks like.....Yu Xinlou doesn't know that this old man is the most highly skilled in the whole caravan, but the few inner force experts are all aware.....Hehe, was he raised by a pig?'

Fang Yuan laughed in his heart and pitied Yu Xinlou.

He was not entirely convinced that Yu Xinlou deserved to be the rightful heir to the caravan.

'With my magical energy, I can make use of the Blood Magic Manual and a small trick from my dream disciple cultivation to hide my cultivation level easily.....'

Seeing that it was effective even against a 4 Heavenly Gates martial artist, Fang Yuan was convinced that his trick to hide his cultivation level was worth it.

At least, without elemental force, no one could see through his concealment.

'What if I encounter Shi Yutong? The chance of my cover being blown will be 50%.....'

Fang Yuan squinted his eyes and was casually talking to Yu Xinlou. At the same time, in his mind, he was trying to figure out the secrets of his dream world. Suddenly, a cheer was heard. "We have reached the Prefecture City!"

"Oh! We are here already?"

Fang Yuan was surprised. He nudged his donkey to approach the front of the carriage.

After a turn, a gigantic city appeared right in front of Fang Yuan's eyes.

The first impression Fang Yuan had on the Secluded Mountain Prefecture City were the tall city walls!

Dark and tall, they were majestic structures stuck into the ground. The shortest wall was at least 35 yards in height!

What was the concept behind building such tall walls?

Even a martial artist who had inner force would find it impossible to climb over the tall wall to enter the city!

"This scene is majestic, isn't it?"

Yu Xinlou saw the scene and smiled wide. "This Secluded Mountains Prefecture City was personally designed and overseen by the first generation prefecture head. The old man was an array master, hence not only are these city walls touching the clouds, their foundations have spiritual arrays carved into them, making them extremely sturdy and without any weakness... There are 3 layers, namely the outer district, inner district, and central district. 10 thousand families live here, making it the most populated place in the northern area of Xia Country!"

"Hmm, this city does live up to its name!"

Fang Yuan nodded his head in agreement. It was the first time he had seen such an ancient majestic city, greatly shocking him.

Especially.....

'So this city was built by the first prefecture master, the array master? No wonder I could feel a mild pressure.....It seemed that the rumours of his doings are true too....'

"The current prefecture master is a spiritual knight, I wonder how powerful he is!"

Fang Yuan silently sighed.

A true spiritual knight would be different from him or Blood Killer. Having already consolidated his magical energy and obtained elemental energy, he would be able to produce powerful spells with a wave of his hand.

On one hand, an array master could build such big city. On the other hand, a spiritual knight could become powerful through the use of spiritual spells. Harnessing energy from heaven and earth,

he could single-handedly match against thousand-men strong troops.

'If the chance of my cover being blown by a Wu Zong is 50%, then the chance of my cover being blown by a spiritual knight will be near to 100%. I have to be more careful...'

As they got closer to the city, the city wall loomed above them.

Outside the city entrance, the city gates were so huge that it looked like a mouth of a giant monster. The carriage was like an ant compared to the size of the city gate.

Around the city gate and above the city walls, there were many martial artists in black armour patrolling the area. All of them looked fierce and were sharp, making it obvious that they were all well trained.

"Inner power! The weakest martial artist here is probably at the 4th Gate!"

Fang Yuan saw this scene and his heart wavered.

The defence in this city was much stronger than that of in the Spirit Returning Sect.

"These are the soldiers of the Secluded Mountain Prefecture and they are under direct orders from the prefecture master. I strongly urge you all not to provoke them! In this city, you can provoke anyone but not any of the Secluded Mountain Prefecture Master's men, or else you will die terribly!"

Yu Xinlou reminded everyone in a soft voice.

"Don't worry, I will be mindful of this!"

Fang Yuan laughed and entered the city with the others after paying an entrance fee.

"Wow!"

After they entered the city, they were welcomed by the lively bustle of the city.

The main road was built with green rocks and was wide enough to fit a few carriages. There was bustling everywhere and there were many stalls on the two sides of the road. There were many street vendors selling different kinds of things; there were too many choices to choose from.

"This city is much more prosperous as compared to the other counties!"

Fang Yuan sighed.

"The Secluded Mountain Prefecture is usually not so busy. Looks like Brother Fang you came at the right time!"

Yu Xinlou laughed and said, "It will be the prefecture master's 300th birthday soon. There will be many guests who are coming from everywhere to give their well wishes. Also, the Secluded Mountain Prefecture Business Council would be taking this chance to hold a few large-scaled fairs to attract every other businessman from other parts of the country to come here. You can also find foreigners here.....This place will become the busiest in this country!"

"Oh? Really?"

Fang Yuan was surprised.

He lived in seclusion for many years and was clueless about such big events. It seemed that Zhou Wenwu did not know that the prefecture master's birthday banquet would be one of Fang Yuan's considerations.

After all, his level was still low and his experience was limited to Qingye City. He would probably not be able to escape the shackles of the Qinghe County.

'But... 300 years old?'

With Master Wenxin's inheritance and the Blood Magic Technique, Fang Yuan was rather familiar with spiritual knights.

A normal Wu Zong, even if he doesn't make any further breakthroughs, can basically live for 200 years, and it's even longer for spiritual knights, with a lifespan of about 300 years at the initial stages.

'According to the words of my master, it is extremely difficult for a spiritual knight to progress to the next level. It looks like this prefecture master does not have much progress in his cultivation. Otherwise, he would not be cooped here.....It seems like his life is about to end soon? Someone else is going to take over the position as the prefecture master soon?'

Thinking about this, he was shocked.

Seeing how packed the prefecture city was, it seemed that it would not be just a simple birthday celebration.

'Looks like there is going to be trouble brewing in the Secluded Mountain Prefecture....but how is this my business?'

After rejecting and thanking Yu Xinlou's invitations many times, Fang Yuan left on his own. Looking at the prosperous street, he smiled to himself.....

Chapter 94: Business Centre

In the central of Prefecture City, there were many treasures, talents and potentials. The city master's birthday hyped up the entire place, making it busier than ever. People from all places came here, and treasures from around the world made their way here too.

Fang Yuan did not rush to trade for spiritual objects and plants, but rather, made a point to look for a hostel to stay for the night.

The Secluded Mountain Prefecture had a curfew. By midnight, the people who had not returned to their lodging, be it, tourists, residents or famous people, would be thrown in jail and become a slave!

It was only reasonable for him to worry about a place to stay for the night.

Due to the overwhelming response from people all around the world, every hostel was full, and the rental price went up a few folds due to the high demand.

After visiting a few other hostels, he realised that they were all full. Fang Yuan became irritated and wrecked a residence, took out money as compensation and booked the entire building.

The head of the household happily received the money and accompanied the entire family to the outskirts of the city to stay there temporarily and let the entire house out to Fang Yuan. While leaving, he explained the situation to the trooper on patrol.

"Hu..."

Fang Yuan walked in and closed the door. He felt a little bored.

"The Secluded Mountain Prefecture City will surely earn loads this time. Who knows if this might be the end of their bad luck or the last of their good luck..."

After a few days of investigation, Fang Yuan understood the happenings of the Secluded Mountain Prefecture City.

"The role of the Prefecture Master was official yet private and is conferred by the Imperial Court. But if one is incapable, his placing would be threatened! The previous few Prefecture Masters fought their way there and were only confirmed after approval from the Xia Country. There was no room for rejection..."

After much thought, Fang Yuan pitied the Xia Country's royal family.

With such constraints over his power as compared to a constitutional monarchy in other countries, it only meant that they had jurisdiction over a few more areas.

Of course, it was none of his concern how the Xia Country's royal family was doing.

He was more concern over the happenings within the Secluded Mountain Prefecture. After all, the Prefecture Master was like a mini emperor over six counties.

If he had completed his cultivation, he might be tempted to run for it.

The current Secluded Mountains Prefecture's Head is a spiritual knight named Liu Yan. There's nothing his Scorching Sun Spell can't burn to a crisp, and his strength is number 1 in Secluded Mountains Prefecture..."

Rumours had it that there were hidden experts within the Prefecture, and therefore could not be just this one spiritual knight.

At the very least, from various traces left behind in Qinghe and Lieyang County, Fang Yuan had discovered three possible locations that held the inheritance of a spiritual knight.

"Blood Demon, and that alchemy master and spiritual knight that helped Shi Yutong.....That's not right, the alchemy master and

spiritual knight might be the same person, otherwise, it would be a little unusual for Shi Yutong to have such a wide network."

He sighed, and his expression changed. "Shi Yutong would surely attend this event since it is such a major thing in the Secluded Mountain Prefecture!"

Fang Yuan did not have to care about anything; Shi Yutong was different. She was the head of a Sect, and any changes in the Secluded Mountain Prefecture, albeit small, would surely affect her Sect, what more for this big change?

After clearing his thoughts, Fang Yuan stood up and went to the Secluded Mountain Court.

The entire vicinity was bustling, but everyone felt unwelcoming.

This place was similar to the Four Seas Court in Singhe County; they were the biggest business council in their areas, and both had strong backings.

"Not many places within the Secluded Mountain Prefecture would trade spiritual objects, but it was still the most convenient place to do so... And I'll have to visit the 'Elemental Gathering Court' one day, as it's renowned for cooking spiritual food!"

"Welcome, my lord!"

At the doorway, two rows of waiters were neatly spaced and offered their greetings to Fang Yuan, and none of them seemed to give him less respect for being young.

A female shopkeeper stood out of the row and asked, "My lord, would you like to do business?"

"I would like to buy spiritual plants!"

Fang Yuan was direct.

"The trading of spiritual plants is done at the Spiritual Food Court, follow me!"

The shopkeeper smiled and led the way. He arrived at a counter.

Many coolies were busy shifting and weighing bags of rice, like a normal rice shop.

Fang Yuan glanced and saw the labels of Vermilion Jade Rice and Emerald Grass, as though they were all on sale.

"Would you like to buy spiritual plants? This is the right season!"

The shopkeeper's round face glowed and continued. "We have just received a new batch of spiritual plants. Although it might seem like boasting, we have the complete selection of spiritual plants in the entire Secluded Mountain Prefecture, and also many other food types for you to choose from... Of course, planting of spiritual food would be rather troublesome, and if you would like to buy a large amount, I regret to inform you that we only have a limited supply..."

As he was speaking, a waiter served two cups of tea.

Fang Yuan sipped a small mouthful, and through the smell and taste of the tea on his taste buds, he realised that even though the tea was not brewed from spiritual leaves, the spiritual essence had spread to it, which was rather rare. He became excited and said, "Take out all your spiritual plants and let's take a look!"

"Alright!"

The shopkeeper chuckled and did not seem to despise him. he clapped his hands and a helper carried out a red sandalwood plate, and on it a jade bottle.

"Come, my lord, please take a look. This Vermillion Jade Rice, the most commonly planted in the county.....There's also Black Jade Rice from the north which can help one fight against the cold if consumed for long periods, and this is Green Striped Rice from the swamps, which increases one's resistance to poisons when consumed.....We also have Bone Quenching Flower, Three Star Fruit..."

Following his introduction of the spiritual plants, Fang Yuan

grew irritated. "Why are all these plants the common ones? Are there no better plants?"

The Black Jade Rice was as common as the Vermilion Jade Rice and could not pique his interest; he could try it out just because it was a new species to him.

"Higher tiered spiritual plants?"

The shopkeeper smiled. "Every sect and every household have limited supply of spiritual food, and would not even let out one grain of rice seed. Other than these common goods, we really don't have anything else..."

'That's it!'

Fang Yuan patted his head, as though he had thought something through.

If one had a grain of spiritual rice, they could keep growing it and increase their supply, and from there increase their power and influence, they could strategically stock up food.

After all, no martial artist would eat spiritual flowers, spiritual grasses or spiritual pills every day, but they could eat spiritual rice every day, which highlighted the importance of rice.

Even the widely circulated Vermilion Jade Rice, when gone through generations of farming and storing, could become the foundation for a household, and therefore no one would want to bring it out to sell.

"It must be my imagination!"

Fang Yuan laughed but thought for a moment. He knew that the value of his Flame Jade Rice would rocket if he put it out for sale!

Even though hope was lost for a higher tiered spiritual rice, Fang Yuan still had interest for the other spiritual plants.

"I am interested in the Sickie Grass, Serrated Flower and the previous two Black Jade and Green Striped Rice. Name me a price!"

Fang Yuan knew that in these shops they would not have any real valuable spiritual plants, but their basic selection was rather wide and therefore started to make his purchase.

Sickle Grass and Serrated Flowers were spiritual flowers and grass, but they possessed no special abilities. They only had stalks and leaves as strong as iron, edges as sharp as knives, and a disposition for harming people. Fang Yuan bought them naturally out of consideration for the safety of the spiritual land.

And as for the other common spiritual plants, he decided to get it to increase his collection and to see if any of it would evolve special traits.

"Mmm, here are the seeds for the spiritual flower and spiritual grass, and the total will be..."

Fang Yuan bought all the spiritual plants which he did not encounter before. The price was rather substantial as the shopkeeper reported the total price.

He surely did not have enough money to pay.

"I did not bring enough money..."

Fang Yuan continued, and seeing no response from the shopkeeper, he retrieved a bamboo fruit and offered it. "To trade this for the rest, how's that?"

"This is?"

The shopkeeper looked at the green bamboo fruit, and his expressionless face changed. "A spiritual fruit?"

Although he sold spiritual plants seeds, the value of an actual spiritual plant was very much higher than that of a spiritual seed.

He was solemn for a moment, then took out a pair of glasses and placed it on his nose. He inspected the fruit. "Hmm... This is... The bamboo fruits from the legends?:

"Oh? You have a good eyesight!"

Fang Yuan praised him, and calmly took another sip of tea.

He was crafty in this. In most other spiritual fruits there would be seeds within the fruit, but the bamboo had to be planted by grafting and the formation of bamboo shoots, and not by fruits, and therefore there would be no seed being given away.

If the shopkeeper knew that Fang Yuan decided to do this because of what he previously said, he would be so angry.

"You're right. This bamboo fruit is the food for phoenixes and can replenish one's magical energy. It will have an unbelievable effect on spiritual birds!"

After a long while, the shopkeeper put down his glasses and looked at Fang Yuan with much hospitality. "Three bamboo fruits will be able to exchange for all these spiritual seeds, and if you have any more, we would like to buy some more with a high price!"

He was rather smart not to inquire about the bamboo shoot and bamboo roots, as he knew that was the customer's privacy. If he asked, the deal would likely fall through.

"I happened to have these few by luck, and that's all I have!"

Fang Yuan lied through his teeth and took out another bamboo fruit with some taels. "Remember to deliver the spiritual seeds!"

"Of course!"

The shopkeeper nodded his head and felt that it was a pity. He carefully kept the two bamboo fruits and ordered for the spiritual seeds to be brought for Fang Yuan to inspect every single seed. There was a piece of paper with writings on it detailing on how he should care for the spiritual plants, which saved him a lot of trouble.

Fang Yuan was pleasantly surprised at their hospitality. He asked. "Shopkeeper, you have good eyesight. Do you provide any appraisal service?"

"Of course, of course!"

The shopkeeper nodded his head.

Even if the Secluded Mountain Court did not have this service to begin with, the shopkeeper would also do it for free to pull their relations closer, considering the bamboo fruit that Fang Yuan had.

'Mm? Is the bamboo fruit really that valuable?'

Fang Yuan was shocked at this scene.

The bamboo fruit could not be planted and the only usage of the fruit was to eat it.

It had the ability to replenish one's Essence, Spirit and Magical energy, and even amongst the spiritual knights, it would be popular.

'The backing of the Secluded Mountain Court would be the Secluded Mountain Prefecture Master, and it seems like... My guess was correct.....'

Chapter 95: Secret Meeting

The effect of the bamboo fruit was extraordinary, but to a spiritual knight, it was just a supplement.

Many spiritual pills, spiritual flowers and spiritual fruits also produced similar or greater effects.

If not, the shopkeeper would not be so polite and would use all means to obtain these special spiritual objects!

Fang Yuan thought about it before taking out the Cracked Ice Fruit which he found at the Red-eyed White King Bird's nest.

"Seed?"

When the shopkeeper saw what Fang Yuan took out, he let out a laugh.

"When I found it, it was already in this condition....."

Fang Yuan helplessly said, "However, I still remember how the actual fruit looked like. I can describe it in detail to you..."

.....

"According to what you said, this fruit seems to be the Icy Fire Jialan. This item would sprout in the first 15 years; its flowers would bloom in the next 15 years, and it would bear fruit 15 years after that. It could calm one's heart, remove one's inner demons, and it had a combination of opposing elements: Yin and Yang. This made it very unique and mysterious, making it something martial artists at the 9th and 10th Gates could dream of but never have!

After a long while, the shopkeeper rubbed his eyes and said in a deep voice.

"Since this fruit is well sought after by 9th and 10th Gate martial artists, could this fruit have a similar effect as compared to the Yin Yang Jade, making breakthroughs easier?"

Fang Yuan's eyes glittered.

"You're correct. If a martial artist at the peak level of the 10th Gate consume this fruit, the chance of him being able to condense the Miniature Elemental Force and making a breakthrough to the 11th Gate will increase by 50%!"

The shopkeeper stroked his beard and said, "Unfortunately, this is just a seed! Also, the conditions for growing this seed are too demanding."

It would take 40 to 50 years for the seed to grow, which was too long for a normal human being. Of course, this was not the main point.

Even if with its seed, it would not germinate in any normal spiritual land.

"I see, thanks a lot!"

Fang Yuan thanked the shopkeeper. He did not feel regretful that the Flower Fox Ferret had actually took half a bite of the fruit.

After all, this fruit was useless to him and he was not in rush to make a breakthrough by taking this fruit.

"I have gotten a branch from the wisteria plant. If you can appraise that it is really from the wisteria, I will give you another spiritual fruit as a reward!"

Fang Yuan took out the branch with a serious look.

"Very well!"

The shopkeeper was very excited but when he saw the wisteria, he was in deep thoughts for quite a while and didn't say a word.

Fang Yuan was disappointed seeing that the shopkeeper couldn't answer. He didn't expect that this experienced shopkeeper in the Secluded Mountains Prefecture City couldn't appraise the spiritual object.

"This branch is really from the wisteria!"

Suddenly, a clear voice interrupted his thoughts. Fang Yuan

lifted his head and saw a beautiful lady dressed in green.

She was wearing a golden bangle on her head and a emerald green belt at her waist. She also had a bamboo flute with her. Her face was smooth and beautiful and her eyes were clear like water.

"You are..."

Fang Yuan gave a doubtful look but was shocked.

This woman was the spiritual knight who helped Shi Yutong during the fight over the treasure map.

‘No.....she is not a spiritual knight. She is just a spiritual disciple!’

Fang Yuan was much more experienced than before and was able to tell her cultivation level by just looking.

"My name is Ling Yin. I cannot help but interrupted when I saw you taking it out. My apologies!"

The young lady took a bow and stared at Fang Yuan with different look.

"There is no need for you to apologise. May I find out the effect of this wisteria branch?"

The shopkeeper stood up and return a humble bow. It was obvious that he wanted to know the answer to his question so badly. If he couldn't get the answer, he would probably not have the mood to eat or sleep for the next few days.

"There is no harm telling you. Wisteria is a rare plant but it does not have much benefits....."

Ling Yin's voice was soft and she looked at Fang Yuan playfully. Seeing him focused, she continued. "However, wisteria is one of the main ingredient used in making Continuation Spiritual Pill!"

"Continuation Spiritual Pill?"

The shopkeeper exclaimed, "Isn't that the spiritual pill which is

rumored to allow one to survive for another 10 days when consumed no matter how serious the person's injuries are?"

"Yes!"

Ling Yin then continued and said, "Unfortunately, the effect of this spiritual pill will be reduced by a lot when it is consumed by a spiritual knight. If not, this spiritual pill will be worth much more..."

"You must be kidding....."

Fang Yuan could not hold back further. "Since the wisteria is one the main ingredients, the other ingredients should be rare and hard to find.....Even if one is able to gather all the ingredients, I'm afraid one will still need a alchemy master's help to produce this spiritual pill. The chances of successfully making this pill shouldn't be that high!"

After hearing what Fang Yuan said, the shopkeeper became less excited and sat down in his chair. He then murmured, "I see.....I'm afraid there is only one person here in the Secluded Mountains Prefecture who is skillful enough to make such pill. However, how would that person be willing to make the pill easily? Previously, Shi Yutong, the sect head of Spirit Returning Sect had to come personally to ask for help. She expended a great amount of spiritual objects and favours before he barely agreed to help. No one else would be bold enough to ask him for help, unless it is the prefecture master himself....."

"Thank you for the explanation, young lady!"

Fang Yuan politely said and took out another bamboo fruit. "Please accept my small gift as a token of my appreciation for your help!"

"I should thank you instead!"

Ling Yin laughed and then continued saying, "If I hadn't seen you taking out this bamboo fruit, I wouldn't have said it. My apologies

to you two!"

She was being direct because of the spiritual object, saving the shopkeeper from embarrassment. Hence, the shopkeeper could not blame Ling Yin for interrupting. Fang Yuan could not help himself but took another look at this lady.

"However, a piece of information in exchange for a spiritual fruit is too much. I shall not take advantage of this and I want you to accept this gift!"

Before Ling Yin left, she took out a emerald green jade with a different expression.

"Oh? This jade is so cooling and it makes it a good toy. Thank you!"

Fang Yuan said without changing his facial expression.

"A toy?"

Ling Yin couldn't help but said, "This jade has something hidden in it. It will be fate if you can uncover its secrets! I shall take my leave!"

Within seconds, she disappeared into thin air.

"Hey, shopkeeper....."

Fang Yuan was playing with the jade in his fingers as he mockingly smiled. "Do you know that lady?"

"You are kidding....."

The shopkeeper shook his hands randomly and said, "She looked like an immortal from heaven. How could I have the honour to know her?"

"An immortal from heaven? Great description of her!"

Fang Yuan kept the spiritual plants and the seed safely in a small package and parted with the shopkeeper. He then left the Secluded Mountains Court without looking back.

‘This Ling Yin, she must have doubted me...’

After he turned into a small alley, he hid himself well before taking a look at the jade as thoughts ran through his mind.

What Ling Yin gave him was a piece of jade!

‘It seems like she could detect my martial arts skill or my high magical energy.....But, what kind of attitude is this?’

His magical energy was above average and he see the inscriptions within the jade.

‘Those who can see this message have magical energy that is above the average person. I invite you to go to a place called Three Elemental Views within the prefecture city to make a sincere wish, and you might have the chance to catch an opportunity!’

The inscriptions appeared gentle but it sounded arrogant to Fang Yuan, making him unhappy.

‘However, this also proved that she did not detect any abnormality from me and only felt that my magical energy was beyond normal. Or maybe she was just hoping that I could read the inscriptions in the jade?’

‘If I chose to go and seek for opportunities, won’t I have to give out all my spiritual objects as gifts?’

Since Fang Yuan had the inheritance from a dream master, he wouldn’t need these opportunities.

He laughed and threw the piece of jade into the air. As it glittered, it landed into the drain.

He laughed softly and left without looking back.

.....

At the same time, back in the Secluded Mountains Court.

Ling Yin went to another hall, as if she had arrived into another land.

A door opened in front of the hall and revealed a person with a bright smile. It was the Sect Head of Spirit Returning Sect, Shi Yutong!

"I'm late again!"

She gently held Ling Yin's hand and sat down.

The surroundings was quiet. There was a bridge with water flowing under it and the occasional bird chirps and cicada noises. There was a Guqin hanged on the wall. The place was separated from the outside world by a tunnel pathway and it was an entirely different world here.

Shi Yutong was a regular here. As the door closed, she personally made a pot of floral tea for Ling Yin. A few golden-veined flower petals were suspended in the tea, as it emitted an orchid fragrance.

"Sister, please forgive me. I should have been able to reach here earlier. Something interesting happened while I was on my way and I encountered an interesting person, which was why I was late....."

Ling Yin smiled while she explained.

"Oh? How interesting was it? Tell me now!"

Shi Yutong seemed to be very interested. After all, she knew that her sister was one who was full of pride.

She was not only born in a family with a rich background, but was also gifted. Her gifts were recognised by many famous teachers as they took care of her, making her slightly arrogant.

Such a person would already be enjoying all the good things in life. What matter would even interest her?

"This thing started from a bamboo fruit....."

Ling Yin's lip had a slight curve. "I had discovered that the young man were not just a normal person. He had an exceptional amount of magical energy and it was sufficient enough for him to become a

spiritual servant!"

Such people with such an amount of magical energy would have the potential to become a alchemy master or a spiritual knight.

But for many years, or perhaps even for the rest of one's life, one would remain at the level of a spiritual disciple - the lowest cultivation level amongst spiritual knights. For the rest of one's life, one would only be able to run errands for spiritual knights, and would be referred to as spiritual servants.

In fact, these spiritual servants were actually brought in by spiritual knights as the spiritual knights were claiming to be recruiting new spiritual disciples but the recruited ones ended up being servants for free.

"From what you said, this young man had inner force, his magical energy was twice as much as a normal person and he also had a rich background. It looks like he is a suitable candidate!"

Shi Yutong nodded in agreement after hearing what Ling Yin said.

Even though spiritual knights and alchemy masters were powerful and skillful, they needed much more resources as compared to Wu Zongs.

In Xia Country, in order to train under these spiritual knights, a large capital is needed. Otherwise, it would be almost impossible for one to become a spiritual knight.

Of course, she wasn't bothered by such matters.

Shi Yutong sighed and suddenly appeared serious. "Sister Ling Yin, that rumour is real.....The Secluded Mountains Prefecture Master Liu Yan is nearing his death. Is your master considering to take over him?"

Chapter 96: Pharmacist

"A Wu Zong can live up to 200 years old, while a spiritual knight can live up to 300 years old. These are fixed figures!"

Ling Yin said in a clear voice. "The master of the Secluded Mountain Prefecture, Liu Yan, is highly skilled in fire-type spiritual spells. His ability to kill is shocking, but he did not have any achievements with respect to cultivation. Furthermore, he endured a serious injury in his younger days, and from then on recuperated and rarely used his ability. He is reaching his end now... Would Sister like to fill up the vacancy of the Secluded Mountain Prefecture Master?"

Shi Yutong became shocked from her cheeky expression. "Sister, you are mistaken! If I can improve my martial arts further, then maybe I would think about it, but now I can only hope for peace within Secluded Mountain Prefecture!"

"That's great!"

Ling Yin smiled innocently, as though she was very happy. "Master is also interested in the appointment, and since Sister has given up, I won't be troubled anymore..."

"Another news for Sister! I previously came in contact with Sect masters from two counties, and they were both supportive of my master taking up the appointment. With Sister's support, it is likely to be settled!"

The Secluded Mountain Prefecture was made up of only six counties. With the support from three and Lieyang County in ruins, they would have gotten the support from the majority.

"Sister, do not worry! Why would I oppose your master?! The Spirit Returning Sect will be behind Master Lu!"

Shi Yutong was a smart woman and clarified her stand.

"Very well, with Sister's support, this is settled!"

Ling Yin smiled, and although she was discussing an important matter, she still had a cheerful disposition.

...

"There is chaos in the Prefecture City!"

It was dawn the next day. Fang Yuan opened the door looked at the sky and thought to himself.

Liu Yan's birthday celebration and the appointment of the Secluded Mountain Prefecture Master would be the cause for trouble!

'A gentleman will not stand under a collapsing wall. Regardless if Liu Yan dies or not, and who would be the newly appointed Prefecture Master, all these are not my business, and it's not worth the risk to be part of it!'

Fang Yuan walked down the street and appeared relaxed. "After a few more trips, and getting everything that I need, I must leave before the birthday dinner begins!"

The Secluded Mountain Prefecture City was huge; there were two large streets stretching to the North and the South, and in the middle was the City Master's Residence.

"Sanyuan Guan is a famous building along the South Street, it seems that it housed a few impressive people here..."

Thinking about the jade that Ling Yin gave him, he flinched and continued on the North Street.

Fang Yuan's objective was simple. He wanted to explore all the shops which sold spiritual seeds, and afterwards walk about the streets to see what he could find.

'I need luck for this, and it cannot be rushed... I can have lunch at Elemental Gathering Court, I've heard that the spiritual feast there is amazing...'

With a happy heart, Fang Yuan dressed up lightly and arrived at

the North Street.

As the date of the birthday celebration drew nearer, the streets became increasingly lively. Many strange items arrived from all over the world, and even though these items did not have many uses, they were still able to pique Fang Yuan's interest and opened his eyes to the world.

"Antiques from the ancient times, every piece is exquisite!"

"Spiritual flower and spiritual fruit, we have everything!"

Knife, spears, swords and halberds, every single one is perfectly designed, don't miss it!"

"Talent show, a martial artist expert in inner force is going to demonstrate it!"

...

Both sides of the street were bustling with life. Fang Yuan was speechless after seeing a few stalls which sold spiritual materials.

'Everything is fake, and once in awhile you would see the Vermilion Jade Rice, and yet they can claim that these are all treasures. All are fakes!'

"Indeed, in the stories, they always talk about scavenging the streets for good stuff, but now I know they are all fake!"

After seeing countless fake goods, Fang Yuan was rather disappointed at not finding anything that he wanted.

"Forget about it, I shall have a feast and change to another location in the afternoon!"

He looked up to the sun and decided.

"Can everyone be my judge! This ill-hearted stall owner is trying to cheat people with fake medicine!!!"

Suddenly, a rough and loud voice was heard; it was from an inner force expert.

Fang Yuan felt interested and squeezed into the crowd to join in the commotion.

In the centre of the crowd, there was a small medicine stall. It had quite a number of pills and medicinal herbs displayed on the table, including a jade bottle, a wooden box, and a plasticine seal. Everything looked normal for a medicine stall.

The stall owner was around 20 years old and was a gentlemanly young man. However, at that moment, he was grabbed at the collar by a rough and burly man. His fist was about to land on his face.

"You immoral fake pharmacist, asking for 10 pieces of gold leaves for one bottle of 'Breath Condensing Powder'. After eating more than half the bottle, my child still couldn't break through the 4th Gate! If you don't explain yourself, I shall let you die here!"

Although he was brute, he had already harnessed inner force and was a [Martial Artist (6th Gate)], which was rather skilled. No wonder no one stepped up to stop him.

"Brother, I have told you before, the Breath Condensing Powder can only improve your chances, but at the end of the day, it is really up to his foundation and cultivation to see if he can break through..."

He continued to explain. "Furthermore, only alchemy masters can produce a sure-hit pill, and the price of it would surely be not as cheap as 10 gold leaves..."

"How dare you talk back!"

The burly man raged and focused his inner force to his palms. He wanted to show this absurd young man what he was capable of.

Although he was reckless, he was not a fool. He knew that in front of such a large crowd, it would not be too nice to rough it out, and opted to directly use his inner force to harm him internally.

"Wait!"

At this moment, a palm landed on his arm.

The reckless and unstoppable inner force was suddenly met with an immovable palm and he was stopped.

"Who are you? Are you standing up for this immoral pharmacist?"

The burly man turned his head around and saw a calm Fang Yuan.

"It is not important as to who I am. I only want to take a look at the Breath Condensing Powder, and I hope you'll let me!"

Fang Yuan chuckled and used a little force. The burly man's hand unknowingly released the collar of the young pharmacist.

'An expert in inner force, and of higher skill than me!'

Looking at the cheeky Fang Yuan, the burly man was shocked and said, "Alright, I shall let you be the judge!"

He delivered a jade bottle to Fang Yuan.

Fang Yuan picked open the cork, poured a little and smelt it. He nodded his head and said, "This is indeed an authentic Breath Condensing Powder!"

He glanced at the burly man who was not convinced and smiled. "The only problem is that the Breath Condensing Powder can only increase your chances. You child could only blame on his luck that he did not break through..."

Seeing that the burly man was continuing to pester the stall owner, he turned serious and whipped out a few pieces of gold leaves. "Here are 5 pieces of gold leaves, take it that I'm buying this bottle of Breath Condensing Powder. Do you really think that the Secluded Mountain Prefecture's troops will not do anything to you if you want to keep this up?"

Seeing how Fang Yuan was stronger than him and even offered compensation, the burly man was appeased and stared at the stall

keeper. "Count your blessings!"

He squeezed out of the crowd and left, embarrassed

Seeing that the action was all over, the crowd dispersed.

"My name is Huang Fu Renhe, and I thank you for your assistance!"

The young man thanked Fang Yuan and bowed. "Give me a period of grace, I will return the money to you!"

"It's alright!"

Fang Yuan waved generously. He only did that because he wanted to help out, so why would he expect him to pay back?

He looked at Huang Fu Renhe's stall and shook his head. "You are..... A pharmacist? These medicinal powders are not bad, the only thing is that the price is too low, and you are likely to be losing money!"

Fang Yuan could not detect any elemental force or miniature elemental force from Huang Fu Renhe, and knew that he wasn't cut out to be an alchemy master or disciple; he had to be a normal pharmacist.

"Without any reputation or backing, if I don't sell it cheaper than the Secluded Mountain Court, who would buy from me?"

Huang Fu Renhe laughed. "Benefactor, I shall not hide from you. That business which involved the 10 pieces of golden leaves was my biggest business. I used it all up to get medicinal herbs to make more medical powder..."

"Don't call me benefactor, just Fang Yuan will do!"

Fang Yuan smiled. "It's about lunchtime now. Pack your stall up and follow me to Elemental Gathering Court, my treat!"

"Why would I let you do that?"

Huang Fu Renhe waved his hands in rejection, but could not fight

Fang Yuan's hospitality. He was pulled along to Elemental Gathering Court, and they opened a room.

This person was inexperienced in the outside world and seemed innocent, and Fang Yuan could see through him.

'Mm, he is indeed a pharmacist. Who would've known that he would have such an experience... Hehe, to become a spiritual servant?'

Listening to him talking, Fang Yuan filled his cup of wine and heartily drank it.

Based on Huang Fu Renhe, he was born with a silver spoon and had a good life. However, he was identified by a mystery person who accepted him as a disciple. As he left his own home, he became increasingly poor and knew what his outcome would be if he stayed on. In the end, he secretly ran away.

"I am such a fool..."

After two cups of wine, Huang Fu Renhe became tipsy and laid on the table. "Based on my potential and spiritual knowledge, how can I become an alchemy master? The most I could hope for is to become a disciple. Master took me in because he wanted another servant, and he very quickly used up all our resources. When my household became broke, his attitude towards me changed and in the end, he even wanted me to test out medicine for him. I had no choice but to run away, to the ends of the world..."

"So that's how it is!"

Fang Yuan encouraged him to drink more, and not long after, Huang Fu Renhe became drunk and slept.

Looking at the snoring Huang Fu Renhe, he was excited. He wasted so much effort not because he noticed anything that he had, but he noticed him!

Even though this person could not become an alchemy master in the future, he could still be a lowly pharmacist, able to mix herbs

to produce medicine, and was familiar with medicine. This was what he was lacking in.

Although Fang Yuan was interested in alchemy, he had limited [Essence] and therefore did not want to get involved too much in it.

He uncovered this piece of gem and wanted to bring him back to the secluded valley.

Anyway, the produce from the secluded valley was enough for Huang Fu Renhe to consume and he could groom him.

Chapter 97: Aid

"Ouch.....my head hurts!"

Huang Fu Renhe opened his eyes and held his head as though it was about to blow up.

At that moment, he recalled vividly what happened yesterday and was very surprised. "This is strange. Even though I owe a stranger a favour, why should I treat him so nicely?"

He didn't know that Fang Yuan was not only a skilful speaker but could also use his magical energy to affect others. As such, he landed into a trap set by Fang Yuan, allowing Fang Yuan to know everything about him.

"Brother Huang Fu, you have woken up. Come and have some soup to sober yourself up!"

Fang Yuan open the door and served a big bowl of hot soup.

"Thank you for your help. This place is....."

Huang Fu Renhe asked as the walls around him looked unfamiliar.

"This is a temporary place that I'm living in. Brother Huang Fu, you don't have to worry, I have brought your stall back along with your medicinal pellets and powder and nothing has been lost.....I admire the medicinal powder that you have made as they are really good!"

Fang Yuan gave a light smile and said.

In reality, this world had a rather traditional view towards pills and medicine. An ordinary pharmacist like Huang Fu Renhe could at most dispense or concoct a few types of medicine. On the other hand, alchemy disciples and alchemy masters could use spiritual fire to concoct higher grade spiritual pills and medicines.

However, through Fang Yuan's thorough investigation, he found

out that Huang Fu Renhe's skills in making pills were of a similar standard to that of a spiritual disciple. If his success rate of making pills was higher, he would have been cultivated by other sects long ago. Of course, Fang Yuan would not let go of this chance.

"Hmm.....Brother Fang, you think too highly of me....."

Huang Fu Renhe blushed slightly.

He aimed for perfection when producing pills and medicine and hence he had incurred much losses. If it was not for his low success rate, he would not have been so poor.

"I shall tell you the truth!"

Fang Yuan revealed. "I am from Qingye City in the Qinghe County. I am actually living in the secluded valley, which is a well known for producing spiritual rice. I am inviting you to have a visit there. Will you accept my invitation?"

"The Qingye Secluded Valley?!"

Huang Fu Renhe squinted his eyes and was surprised. "Are you the famous doctor from the secluded valley?"

"I have to say that is me since there is only one secluded valley in Qingye City!"

Fang Yuan touched his nose and didn't expect that he would be that famous.

"Pardon me for the disrespectfulness!"

Huang Fu Renhe immediately bowed and was still in shock.

He could feel that Fang Yuan was willing to establish a relationship with him. If he were to go to the secluded valley, with Fang Yuan's assistance, his skills in producing pills and medicine would definitely improve tremendously.

However, even though Fang Yuan produces his own spiritual objects, Huang Fu Renhe's experiments required a vast amount of resources. Could Fang Yuan supply his needs?

Also.....

"Even though my secluded valley is not that big, I should be able to handle and support all your experiments' needs!"

Fang Yuan seemed to know what was on Huang Fu Renhe's mind and assured him.

Fang Yuan was not lying. Even if the secluded valley was not big enough, he had another piece of spiritual land in the Green Peak. If he had not seen Huang Fu Renhe's strong foundations, he could easily spend large amounts of money to invite any other pharmacists.

As for alchemy masters, they not only needed to be talented but also needed a master to pass down skills to them. At the moment, Fang Yuan wasn't thinking about this as this was impossible for him.

"Since you have invited me, I shall gladly accept your invitation. However, I will have to pick my sister up!"

Huang Fu Renhe's reply was swift and decisive. Fang Yuan was not expecting such a quick response.

'Wow.....he answered so quickly although I had already prepared a few other methods to convince him just in case!'

Fang Yuan looked at Huang Fu Renhe and had a feeling that Huang Fu Renhe was not stupid at all. It seemed like Huang Fu Renhe had tricked him instead of the other way round.

'On top of that martial artist previously, could he have provoked many others and is looking for means to get out of the prefecture?'

"Good, since you still have another family member, I shall bring her back as well!"

With a slight doubt, he followed Huang Fu Renhe to the south district outside the city.

As compared to the prosperity inside the city, the south district

here felt like a slum. The houses here were built side by side and did not look stable, as though a breeze could blow the houses down. There were piles of rubbish along the road which gave a horrible stench.

"You used to live in such places?"

Fang Yuan scrutinised the place, embarrassing Huang Fu Renhe in the process. Fang Yuan added, "The people here are really poor."

"My house is just right in front, the one below the small bridge!"

He quickened his footsteps as he approached the entrance of his house. "I was drunk and didn't return home. My younger sister should be very worried."

"Brother Renhe, why are you only back now?"

At the roadside, there were a few people in tears as they called out to him. "Something bad happened at your house. A few fierce people went into your house!"

"What?"

Huang Fu Renhe was shocked and quickly ran under the bridge.

Along the river, there was a straw cottage and covered with mud outside. There were many people gathering outside his house and a middle-aged lady exclaimed as she saw Huang Fu Renhe coming. "Mister Huang Fu, hurry up! Your sister is being taken away by a few bad guys!"

"Lanruo! Lanruo!"

After hearing what the lady said, Huang Fu Renhe became very anxious and squeezed through the crowd, and saw a few strong men trying to her sister away.

"What are you all doing? Let go of my sister now!"

Huang Fu Renhe immediately pounced forward, his eyes welled with tears.

"Bang!"

One of the men laughed and pushed him away, as he fell to the ground.

"Brother!"

Even though her sister was young and her face was covered with dirt, her voice was sweet and clear and her eyes were glittering.

"So you are her brother! Hehe.....your sister is pretty. I want her for 5 taels of silver!"

A man with a small beard walked out from the straw cottages. He rubbed his small beard and threw out a silver piece with a cold laugh

"Get out of here now!"

Huang Fu Renhe was infuriated.

If not for spending a huge capital for the resources in producing pills and medicine, how would he become so poor? No matter how poor his family was, they were surely not worth just a few taels of silver.

"Looks like....you are in big trouble!"

Fang Yuan had realised that this group of men were not simple.

'If they wanted her just because she was pretty, what was the use of having a young girl? Wouldn't they have to support her for another few years?'

'If they wanted to sell her away for money, there were other choices as there were many other families outside the city who were also selling their children....'

Fang Yuan carefully looked at the young girl. She was dirty and it didn't seem like she had anything special.

'Eh?'

However, after looking at her for a few times, he realised

something.

'This girl's magical energy is very strong..... almost 3 times as much as a normal person! Her magical energy has reached the threshold of a spiritual knight's!'

Magical energy was mysterious and could not be otherwise detected without special means.

For example, Fang Yuan could conceal much of his real power and managed to deceive Ling Yin.

However, this young girl had not been trained and was born with such overflowing magical energy. Hence, she did not know how to conceal her real power. With Fang Yuan's dream master cultivation, even though he was just a dream disciple with limited offensive capabilities, his skills in detection was superb and could sense the difference in that young girl.

'This means that.....this group of men are not simple. They are most likely to be puppets to some powerful person!'

'But to kidnap my sister?'

Fang Yuan let out a cold laughter and went to Huang Fu Renhe's side. "Do you need my help?"

"Yes, please. I will remember this!"

Huang Fu Renhe was in a dire situation and needed any help he could get.

"Very well!"

Fang Yuan nodded his head and blocked the group of them.

"Hey kid, go mind your own business and don't interrupt us!"

The man with the small beard was startled at first and then gave a warning with a wicked smile. He was wearing a shirt with the sign of a wolf's head.

"Aahh....the imprint of the Wild Wolves Gang?"

A few screams were heard and the crowd began to disperse. Many of them retreated as they were afraid.

The Wild Wolves Gang was the gang that controlled this poor district. It was rumoured that the gang leader was a 4 Heavenly Gates martial artist. The people in the gang were violent and rude. Their reckless nature allowed them to earn money through extortion.

"How? Do you still want to interfere?"

The man with the small beard replied with a cocky face, deriving happiness from threatening Fang Yuan.

His gang had real influence in the area. Even though he was just a small pawn in the gang, he became rich ever since he took up private jobs.

He was even happier seeing Lanruo struggling.

The glowing talisman he had showed that she was a suitable person. If he could turn Lanruo in, he would be able to get 100 golden leaves as a reward!

"Brother Fang, what should we do?"

Huang Fu Renhe's feeling was dampened.

He clearly knew the intentions of the Wild Wolves Gang.

"What do you mean what should we do? How could you not do anything and look at your sister being taken away?"

Fang Yuan looked at Huang Fu Renhe.

"How can I do that?"

Huang Fu Renhe shook his head.

"Then things are easy!"

Fang Yuan went forward and said, "Do you all want to break your arms on your own and kowtow to apologise or do you all need me to help you?"

"What an arrogant kid, break his limbs!"

The man with the small beard was furious and saw a silhouette moving quickly.

"Kacha! Kacha!"

Sounds of bone fractures were heard. He wanted to retreat quickly, but it was too late.

"Aahh! My hand!"

"Spare me!"

"A martial artist!"

.....

Among the screams, Fang Yuan easily broke the arms of a few gangsters and brought the young girl to safety. He then stood in front of the man with the small beard and smiled at him.

"Aahh....you better not come near me! My uncle is the protector of the Wild Wolves Gang. He.....he..."

The man with the small beard retreated and was crying in pain silently.

"Oh!"

Fang Yuan nodded his head. He then grabbed the man's right arm and twisted it. "So what?"

"Karak!"

A fracture sound came and the man immediately knelt on the ground with tears and mucus dripping down.

"Hmm?"

Looking at the talisman that fell out of clothing, a puzzled expression appeared on his face: "This is.....spiritual inscriptions. This spells trouble!"

"Leave now!"

He turned his head without looking back at the man and called out to Huang Fu Renhe.

"Okay!"

Seeing what had happened, Huang Fu Renhe knew that he couldn't stay here any longer, and quickly entered the straw cottage. Not long after, he came out cursing while carrying a big baggage. He then kicked a few of the gangsters as they once destroyed his stuff.

"You bring your sister and leave now! Remember to wait for me at the house!"

Fang Yuan handed Lanruo back over to Huang Fu Renhe and reminded him.

Chapter 98: Wild Wolves Gang

"I can't thank you enough with words!"

Huang Fu Renhe bowed before leaving with Lanruo.

Fang Yuan went beside the man with the beard and held the spiritual talisman. He then asked, "Who gave you this spiritual talisman?"

"Aahh...you are dead! I will not let you off....."

The man was rolling on the ground in pain and shouted. There was no way for the both of them to have a conversation.

"Sigh.....I knew it....."

Fang Yuan shook his head and helplessly stared at the incoming reinforcement.

The group of reinforcement looked much more elite. All of them were wearing long robes with the same big wolf's head imprint on their chests. They were indeed fierce and could bring silence in the village by striking fear.

"Kacha! Bang!"

Seeing them coming, the crowd instantly dispersed and everyone went back into their houses. They locked their doors and windows as they were afraid of them.

"You are the one who injured my gang members?"

Among all the men from the gang, there was a middle-aged man who took a step forward and asked. His face seemed to be glowing and resembled to the man with the beard.

"Who are you?"

Fang Yuan asked, even though he already knew the answer.

"I'm Du Feng, the protector of the Wild Wolves Gang!"

He was extremely composed and his eyes looked fierce, evident of

a Martial Artist (7th Gate). Fang Yuan was quite surprised that even a small gang leader here in the Secluded Mountains Prefecture would be so well trained in martial arts.

"Very well, your gang has been taking innocent people from their families forcefully. What crime should you all be guilty?"

Fang Yuan said loudly with a sense of justice, as though he represented justice.

"We take away innocent people forcefully?"

Du Feng was a little doubtful at first but then realised that it was likely that his nephew, the man with the small beard, could either be lustful, or this could be part of his private job.

However, he was certain he should help his nephew, but he didn't know Fang Yuan's background, explaining his hesitation.

"It looked like you have no idea"

Fang Yuan stepped on the leg of the man with the beard and slowly added pressure. "Speak now, or else I will break all your limbs and cripple for life!"

"Aahh....I will speak! I will speak!"

The man with the beard cried out loud.

To him, being dead was way better than living a crippled life. His biggest fear was to be crippled for his life.

"I was instructed by a lady. She will ask me to source for suitable children whenever she comes to trade with me. I don't know where she lives....Also, I remember that she has a nice voice!"

This man was a weakling. He did not hesitate to speak the truth under pressure, while his uncle remained speechless.

"I see!"

Fang Yuan nodded his head, turned his back and left.

Such arrogance from Fang Yuan made Du Feng furious.

This was his first time seeing a person looking down at the Wild Wolves Gang!

"How dare you!"

Seeing Fang Yuan taking his leave, Du Feng could not resist and grabbed Fang Yuan's back.

"Ha!"

Without looking back, Fang Yuan struck his palm backwards.

"Bang!"

With Fang Yuan's palm, Du Feng's body flew and he spat out a mouthful of blood in mid-air. He was left in shock. "4 Heavenly Gates!"

He didn't expect such a young martial artist to have achieved the 4 Heavenly Gates!

Also, Fang Yuan was not just a normal Martial Artist of the 9th or 10th Gate. The feeling of resistance Du Feng felt from Fang Yuan was beyond the level of his own gang leader. He started to draw similarities to the famous experts who had achieved the peak level of the 4 Heavenly Gates long ago!

"What now? Do you want to continue?"

Fang Yuan observed his surroundings. After such a commotion, there was still no presence of the Secluded Mountain Prefecture soldiers rushing here. It was probably because this was a poor district and the fact that the Wild Wolves Gang were involved.

"No! I wouldn't dare!"

Du Feng forced himself to get on his feet and broke into cold sweat.

Such an expert like Fang Yuan could wipe out their whole gang overnight!

Upon reaching this thought, Du Feng immediately bowed and

apologised. "This man is ignorant and is rude to you. You can do whatever you want to him. Don't be angry!"

"What?"

The man with the beard was surprised by his uncle's reaction. He didn't expect his highly skilled and capable uncle to be defeated in one palm, and to give himself up without hesitation.

The rest of the men in the gang were extremely adaptable and knew how to react to the situation for fear of death. Without hesitation, they kowtowed and apologised, with their foreheads bleeding. "Sir please spare us! Sir, please spare us!"

"I will spare you all!"

Fang Yuan waved his hand. He knew that he would still have to find out the source of the spiritual talisman from the man with the beard.

"Young hero, our gang leader likes to meet new capable young people. If you don't mind, would you like to come along?"

Du Feng realised that Fang Yuan could be negotiated easily and offered him.

"I'm not that skilful!"

Fang Yuan was shocked. He was not that foolish to enter the base of his enemy, which would give them a good opportunity to attack him. Even though they were not enemies now, he still would not go.

He then left and disappeared within seconds.

.....

Du Feng stared at Fang Yuan's back and was speechless for quite a while.

"Uncle....uncle!"

The man with the beard then managed to get up now. He held his

broken arm and worriedly exclaimed.

"Hmm!"

Du Feng stood with both of his hand behind his back and gave a cold look. "Look what you have done.....You better start telling me what happened in detail.....and when have you started doing dirty jobs for other people?"

He asked with much disappointment and anger.

Ever since the situation outside had become unstable, the whole gang had been keeping a low profile under the instructions of their gang leader. After all, they would get into big troubles easily if they were to be in high profile.

However, Du Feng didn't expect his own nephew to attract so much attention. Was he tired of living?

"Uncle, please spare me....."

What more could the man with the beard say? Say that he was greedy and lustful? He could only ask for forgiveness now.

"We shall talk again when we get back!"

Even though Du Feng felt like killing his useless nephew, he held back his anger.

The group of them left hurriedly. After they had disappeared into the next corner of the street, only then did the residents dared to open their doors and windows.

However, there was a silhouette following the group of them. It was a curious Fang Yuan. "Another mysterious spiritual knight.....The situation here in the Secluded Mountain Prefecture is getting more complicated!"

He didn't want to announce his arrival as he headed towards their headquarters but felt that it would be harmless for him to follow the gang stealthily.

.....

The headquarters of the Wild Wolves Gang was not far from the previous place. It was a big house and was well guarded by a few men of the gang.

Back in the hall of the headquarters.

"Pa!"

A loud slap was heard. Du Feng looked at his nephew who was crying out loud. He felt like killing to prevent him more troubles. "Speak now....who are you working for!"

"Uncle, please spare me....."

The man with the beard teared and mucus was dripping down. He revealed the truth.

"What? A spiritual talisman? Which will appear different as it detects suitable children?"

Du Feng was an experienced man. He went up and kicked his nephew. "You are willing to do what others have told you to do. Why don't you die when I asked you to do so?!"

Du Feng was scared and shocked.

such means were definitely those of spiritual knights or spiritual disciples. Moreover, the person did things so sneakily, which made him most likely a foreigner cultivating with evil arts. The consequences would be unimaginable if the soldiers of the Secluded Mountain Prefecture would find out his involvement in such doings.

However, he could not suddenly stop. What if they suspect that there was something wrong? Would they take it out on the Wild Wolves Gang?

It was not a difficult task for the weakest spiritual disciple to wipe out the entire Wild Wolves Gang.

Thinking about this, Du Feng kicked his nephew once more, causing him to spit out another mouth of blood.

"This matter is too serious. I will have to report to the gang leader!"

Just as Du Feng was hesitating, a young man dressed in purple entered the main hall. "What happened, Du Feng?"

The young man looked calm and his eyes were glowing. Unknowingly, he had a creepy look.

"Gang leader!"

Du Feng bit his teeth and informed the gang leader about the incident.

"A suspected evil spiritual disciple and a martial artist who has achieved the 4 Heavenly Gates..."

The creepy looking young man was the gang leader of the Wild Wolves Gang. His name was Diao Guangdou. He had already developed inner force and could extend his lifespan. His actual age was much higher than that of Du Feng's. Also, what he had experienced was a miracle. He was only a humble waiter in the past. It only took him a short period of time to become the leader of a gang.

"This matter is indeed complicated!"

At that moment, the inspiring Gang Leader Diao was troubled after hearing Du Feng.

"Gang leader, should I?"

Du Feng looked at his nephew and gave a ferocious look.

In order to keep his position as the protector of the gang and to show his loyalty, he wouldn't mind killing his own nephew.

"You shall keep an eye on him!"

Diao Guangdou waved his hand and two men came to drag the man with the beard out.

"I have failed you!"

After the cry from the man with the beard had faded away, Du Feng then knelt on the ground and asked for forgiveness from Diao Guangdou.

"Sigh....."

Diao Guangdou heaved a long sigh and said, "I didn't expect to meet such troubles after settling the big plan!"

Du Feng was surprised. He already knew that the gang leader had been planning something big but didn't expect him to take action now. Keeping a low profile previously was just a coverup. He suddenly felt that the gang leader was too profound to be understood.

"I deserve to die!"

Du Feng had no choice but to ask for forgiveness.

"Forget it. Since you have made a mistake, I will still have to punish you..."

Diao Guangdou tucked his lips and said, "Well, since there is a new prisoner in the prison, you shall serve your punishment by guarding the prison. Don't make any more mistakes, do you understand?"

"A prisoner? Is the prisoner from the White Cloud Business Council....."

Du Feng's eyes suddenly brightened up. He bowed and dismissed himself. "Understood, sir. I shall not make any more mistakes."

After Du Feng had left, Diao Guangdou touched his chin and was in deep thoughts. "Unfortunately.....if we had gotten hold of that girl, we would have a chance to be on good terms with the spiritual disciple. Compared to the spiritual knight, it is not worth to sacrifice the relationship with the spiritual knight to be on good terms with the 4 Heavenly Gates martial artist.....Hehe, thinking of having good terms with that two of them? I'm afraid the outcome would be disastrous!"

He was in disdain of Du Feng's choice as Du Feng did not want to choose a side during the fight. What was he thinking?

Chapter 99: Rescue Mission

"Tsk tsk...Chief Diao is indeed introverted! At the same time, he is also straightforward and decisive!"

Amidst the chatter and laughter, Fang Yuan suddenly emerged.

"How did you get in?"

Diao Guangdou was taken by surprise.

This was the headquarters of the Wild Wolves Gang! The very core of the sect! Apart from the constant patrols along the perimeters, within the compound there were minimally two inner force experts protecting the area.

Furthermore, Diao Guangdou, the most powerful member of the gang, was present today.

Despite all these, Fang Yuan was still able to intrude without being spotted. What did this represent?

"Even though this person is young, his powers are extremely advanced and powerful. Could he be an ancient entity from some unknown godforsaken land?"

Diao Guangdou visually assessed Fang Yuan for a moment before bursting into laughter, "Hello senior, what may I do for you?"

"You are indeed quite good at bootlicking! What a pity... Nothing can save you today!"

Fang Yuan shook his head as he replied.

With the help of Du Feng's 'informant', Fang Yuan was crystal clear about the defences of the Wild Wolves Gang.

Furthermore, with Fang Yuan's magical powers, he heard Chief Diao's earlier conversation with his closest subordinates loud and clear. This created a desire to kill in Fang Yuan.

Anyway, for a lowly sect like that, all of its members definitely

had blood on their hands. Even if Fang Yuan wiped out the entire sect he would not have an ounce of regret.

Of course, Fang Yuan would not admit the true reason for the attack. He waited and eavesdropped on their conversation to pick out what they had to say about him.

"Shut up, die!"

He glanced at Diao Guangdou who looked like he still wanted to beg for mercy and scoffed.

"Voom!"

After attaining Gui Wusheng's Paralysing Scream and combining it with the techniques in the Blood Magic Manual, the effects were even more extraordinary.

It was almost as if right after Fang Yuan shouted, Diao Guangdou, who had broken through the 9th gate and was also an expert of the 4 Heavenly Gates, was rooted to the spot.

"Slash!"

Fang Yuan moved forward and nonchalantly stretched out his right arm, baring his razor-sharp nails. The thrusting force from this move cut through the air like a knife.

With the combination of the Paralysing Scream and his advance, even a martial artist who has broken through the 12th gate would minimally suffer a major injury from this.

For a martial artist in the 4 Heavenly Gates who had not broken through the Earth Gate, it was almost certain such a move would kill him.

"Ah! Nine Snake Rodent Strikes!"

However, Diao Guangdou's reaction caused a slight surprise in Fang Yuan.

Diao Guangdou who was momentarily stunned suddenly opened his eyes and flew backwards. All the bones in his body suddenly

softened and his body crumbled to the floor. Like a boneless snake, he dodged Fang Yuan's fatal claw with extreme agility.

"Who are you? Guards!!!"

In a flash, Diao Guangdou retreated backwards a few metres and shouted out for help.

Blood flowed from the conspicuous claw wounds on his chest. During Fang Yuan's surprise attack, Diao Guangdou did not escape fully unharmed.

"It's the chief!"

"There's a crisis in the main hall!"

"Send reinforcements now!"

...

There was the commotion of the shouting of commands and hurried footsteps.

"Erm?"

Fang Yuan frowned as he was also surprised, "Interesting. Judging by your martial prowess, you should have lost your head by now..."

Just now, Fang Yuan remembered clearly seeing a flash of red light on Diao Guangdou's body. Diao Guangdou blocked out his Paralysing Scream, rendering it almost ineffective.

It seemed that Diao Guangdou was clear that his magical powers were no match against Fang Yuan's. The only possibility for what happened was there was external intervention.

"Hahaha...I could not have imagined that you are actually quite impressive. Looks like I have to use my full powers!"

Fang Yuan burst out laughing and stepped forward. The muscles on his body swelled out piece by piece and took on a bluish-black colour. It enlarged to the extent it looked as though Fang Yuan was

wearing a layer of metal armour.

"He is too strong, retreat!"

Diao Guangdou grabbed on his chest and fled hastily.

He was only able to survive earlier as he relied on a unique treasure to protect his mind. But he knew that this object had its limitations and to fight against Fang Yuan whose powers were much more superior than his was suicidal. His only chance of survival was to retreat and regroup with the rest of the sect and attempt to fight Fang Yuan through the advantage of numbers.

However, Fang Yuan was too fast for him.

In what seemed to be a gust of strong wind, Fang Yuan sent a punch flying at Diao Guangdou just as he stepped out of the main hall.

"Hoo hoo!"

In the midst of the strong wind, Diao Guangdou felt that he was no longer chased by a person, but a wild beast.

After the strong wind subsided, Fang Yuan's punch hit him like a missile, knocking the air out of his lungs.

"Even for a 12th gate martial artists, your powers are considered very impressive!"

Diao Guangdou widened his eyes with rage. At this point, he knew that the only chance for him to live was to fight back. Mustering up the final bits of his courage and will, he turned around to face his enemy. With a loud noise exploding from his waist, he right arm turned into the claw of an eagle and his left arm turned into a serpent. Both shot out like arrows as Diao Guangdou shouted, "Dual Eagle Snake Killing Technique!"

"Snap!"

"Shoo!"

The force behind this technique erupted. This was Chief Diao's

signature move and several martial artists had died under it.

However, as his fist and claw landed on Fang Yuan's body, it felt as though they contacted a sheet of strong iron. Even the force which he channelled into the move rebounded back and hit him. The colour drained from Diao Guangdou's face.

"Iron Skin...How is it that its power is so strong?"

In that split second, an idea popped into Diao Guangdou's mind. It was also his last idea.

This was because after his failed attack, Fang Yuan was already now right in front of him.

"Die!!!"

Fang Yuan was ready this time. He responded with everything he had. Apart from using the Paralysing Scream again, he stretched out his arms and cut off Diao Guangdou's paths of escape and with immense force, he struck the target in the centre.

At that moment, he had little care for whatever technique he used. He purely depended on his superior martial arts prowess to overpower Diao Guangdou.

Diao Guangdou was rooted to the ground, petrified. He bore the full force of Fang Yuan's attack as Fang Yuan's arms smashed on both sides of his head.

"Bang!"

With a loud bang, his head exploded. The blood and brains from his head became a gruesome mess and blood flowed out from his nostrils and eyes. Then he slumped to the ground.

"Erm...this move worked again. Maybe the amulet on him only had a one-off protective function?"

Out of curiosity, Fang Yuan got down and searched Diao Guangdou's body. Then he stood up and glared at the rest of the Wild Wolves Gang.

"Why? Who else has a death wish?"

With this roar and his almost demonic appearance combined with how he killed Diao Guangdou in lightning speed, he looked very intimidating.

"Chief...chief is dead..."

"This person is unbeatable...."

After all, Wild Wolves Gang was a rowdy bunch of undisciplined rascals. Upon seeing the gruesome death of their chief, chaos ensued as they instantly abandoned their posts and weapons and fled desperately for their lives.

"They can go, but you cannot!"

Fang Yuan looked around and stepped forward, like a tiger entering a flock of sheep. Before long he carried out a skinny inner force martial artist out of the chaos.

Seeing that this person was well-clothed and well-endowed with jewellery, Fang Yuan deduced that this person held an important position in the sect and asked, "Did your chief take action against the White Cloud Business Council before? The one where Yu Xinlou was a young lord at?"

Fang Yuan found him worth saving and helping. Had it been anyone else, Fang Yuan would not have even bothered.

"Correct!"

Even though the skinny man was an inner force expert and one of the protectors, he behaved timidly in front of Fang Yuan. He said, "Our chief launched a surprise attack and exterminated the White Cloud Business Council and their possessions. He also kidnapped the young lord to wait for the right moment to seize the inheritance and possessions of the Yu Family...All these were the ideas of the chief, it has nothing to do with me!"

"Take me to the prison and I shall spare your life!"

Fang Yuan commanded coldly.

"Yes...yes sir!"

Shaking in fear, the skinny man led Fang Yuan to the place.

When the news of Diao Guangdou's death spread out, the entire prefecture ensued in chaos. People were busy fighting with each other, fleeing or looting the prefecture. Nobody bothered to avenge their dead chief. The foolish few who stood in the way were easily killed and pushed aside by Fang Yuan as he easily arrived at the back yard.

As this was a private prison by the Wild Wolves Gang, it was naturally not too conspicuous. It was well camouflaged under an artificial hill.

"Ah...Protector Zhang, what happened to you?"

Arriving inside, the disciples who were incognisant of what just happened looked on in disbelief and shock as they saw Elder Zhang behaving so obediently next to Fang Yuan.

"Hmm, seeing that you have been obedient, I shall spare your life!"

Fang Yuan waved his hand. With this, Elder Zhang was sent flying out of the prison and he crashed with a few of the prison guards, causing them to vomit blood and pass out.

"Who dares to offend...eh, it's you..."

After entering the corridor, a figure appeared. It was Du Feng. Upon seeing Fang Yuan, the colour drained from his face.

"Get lost!"

Fang Yuan shouted. He sprinted forward with lightning speed and pressed his palm on Du Feng's Dantian.

"Ah...you...removed all my martial arts abilities?"

Du Feng fell to the ground momentarily as blood trickled out

from the corner of his mouth. He had an excruciating expression on his face.

"You should count yourself lucky that you can even live like a normal human being..."

Fang Yuan took away a bunch of keys from his waist and opened the metal gate at the end of the corridor.

"Whooo!"

A gust of stale and repugnant air gushed onto his face instantly.

In the prison, the air circulation was expected to be poor, but the atmosphere stank of a noxious odour.

"Ah...what have you done to my uncle?"

Furthermore, in an adjacent cell, Fang Yuan caught sight of a familiar person. It was the man with the mouse-like beard who offended him earlier.

"Haha, I gave you a chance, but you refused it. You are indeed looking for trouble!"

Without looking, he flicked a small rock which hit the man, causing him to gently fall to the ground.

"Ah...Someone is breaking into the prison!"

"Save me, I have a lot of wealth and I can also pass on to you very formidable martial arts techniques!"

"Save me!"

...

A huge commotion erupted as several prisoners stuck their black and filthy arms through the window grills and they tried to catch Fang Yuan's attention. However, behind the grills, many pairs of menacing eyes shone in the pitch darkness.

"I am not the saviour, do not expect me to save you!"

Fang Yuan rolled his eyes. If they were innocent civilians, there

was no reason for them to be locked up in here. As for whether this punishment for whatever crime they committed was justified, it was not worth his time to ascertain.

Fang Yuan walked further down into the basement of the prison and he saw a few cells that looked especially impregnable. Looking through the small window, he saw a man lying on the ground.

"Yu Xinlou!"

Fang Yuan smiled.

You are...Brother Fang?"

Hearing a familiar voice, Yu Xinlou climbed up instantly. Upon seeing Fang Yuan, his mouth widened slowly and he asked, "What are you doing here?"

Chapter 100: Birthday Dinner

"Whoosh... Piak!"

Fireworks exploded in the skies of Secluded Mountain Prefecture City, like a shower of meteors; they fell towards the ground with their colourful flaming tails.

In the blink of an eye, it was the day of the birthday dinner. The entire Secluded Mountain Prefecture City was celebrating.

Even though there were more conflicts on the streets and a few gangs being destroyed due to the influx of people from all around the nation, it was all neglected due to the joyous occasion of the birthday dinner.

Prefecture Master's mansion.

"As Qinghe City's Spirit Returning Sect Sect Head, I offer my greetings to you, Prefecture Master!"

Amongst the loud discussions, Shi Yutong wore a cloth over her face and entered the Prefecture Master's mansion under the escort of a few Spirit Returning Sect disciples.

Spirit Returning Sect was a stronghold in the entire county, and therefore Shi Yutong's arrival was quite a big affair. She was directed to the heart of the hall.

'The troops of Secluded Mountain Prefecture are impressive, indeed impressive...'

She appeared friendly and greeted a few people whom she personally knew, but deep inside she was surprised.

At the gate of the mansion, there were two rows of Martial Artists (6th Gate and above) to guard it. There were emotionless and had metal armour, and were able to strike fear in anyone who looked at them.

At this point, all the guards were martial artists who broke

through the 4 Heavenly Gates!

These highly skilled martial artists were able to lead a few hundred troops among the Secluded Mountain Prefecture.

After all, the weakest soldier within the Secluded Mountain Prefecture armed forces was a Martial Artist (4th Gate). A few capital leaders were at the Wu Zong level and were comparable to Shi Yutong!

If they didn't have such power, they wouldn't be able to ensure peace in the Secluded Mountain Prefecture!

At the seat of the hall master sat a cheerful old man, wearing a spiritual robe with a hundred 'longevity' sewn onto it. He was skinny and it was as though he would fall from a strong breeze. However, he had fire in his eyes and seemed unpredictable.

This was the Secluded Mountain Prefecture Master, who had controlled over 6 counties and the Secluded Mountain Prefecture armed forces - Liu Yan.

"Spirit Returning Sect's Shi Yutong congratulates my lord, prefecture head, and specially presents 3 stalks of spiritual ginseng and 10,000 gold coins. Here's wishing you longevity!"

Shi Yutong looked at Liu Yan and paid her greetings. Her loud and clear voice travelled throughout the entire hall, and her pricey gifts made a commotion.

"Haha..... Yutong, you are too kind, please recover!"

Liu Yan laughed heartily, and even his beard began to float up; it was evident that he was pleased with Shi Yutong. "Please have a seat, and promise me you'll drink with me a few cups tonight!"

"Of course!"

Shi Yutong laughed, got seated and scanned the surroundings.

She was Wu Zong and the master of a county, she was seated at a special table with everyone at the same level as her. A few of them

were the capital leaders, and there was one seat empty. He was under Liu Yan and was not present.

"Sect Head Shi, I've heard that you have just taken in a highly capable disciple. There is someone to take over your place now, and I am so envious of you!"

At the other table across, a muscular man offered a drink.

He was wearing the armour of the Secluded Mountain Prefecture City and did not bother to take it off. He used a large bowl for his wine and was extremely forthright.

"Niu capital had a good reputation..."

Shi Yutong downed one bowl of wine. "My disciple is playful. Even though she might have potential, how could she compare to the talents here in the Prefecture City?"

"We cannot compare! Not at all!"

The capital leader of Niu County shook his head and pointed at the empty seat. "After all, you recruited Master Lu's help to make a spiritual pill for her. With that to aid her, no matter how talented our people are, how can we compare to your disciple?"

Shi Yutong froze and was deep in thought for a moment. A voice came from the side. "Master Lu is the only alchemy master in Secluded Mountain Prefecture and has many friends in many counties... Isn't that right, Sect Head Shi?"

His eyes were extremely sharp and whoever he gazed at felt uncomfortable.

Shi Yutong felt even more unbearable and almost wanted to run for the door!

The few people that he stared at were those who supported Master Lu to take over the appointment!

Liu Yan had mixed feelings, raised his wine bowl and scanned the surroundings as though he did not hear the previous exchange.

At the moment, the entire atmosphere changed, and there was an uncomfortable silence as though someone died.

Under such a huge stress, a few Wu Zong martial artists broke into cold sweat.

Just before Shi Yutong decided to start the fight, a few high pitched voices travelled from outside, albeit fearful. "Lu Renjia, Master Lu, brings my disciple Ling Yin to offer our greetings to Prefecture Master!!!"

...

"It's so lively within the Prefecture City!"

At this moment, there was a group of people observing from outside the Prefecture City.

Fang Yuan stood on a little hill and observed everything. He then looked at Huang Fu Renhe and Yu Xinlou by his side. "What? Are you still wondering why I retreated?"

"Why would we?"

Huang Fu Renhe waved his hand. "Benefactor saved my life and my sister's life, and we will never forget this favour. Regardless, I will always obey you!"

Fang Yuan smiled and looked at the small girl beside him.

Lanruo was washed up and wore a robe. Other than being slightly malnutrition, she had no difference as compared to a normal child, but Fang Yuan could sense her unimaginable magical energy; she was a perfect candidate to become a spiritual knight.

If there could be another miracle, she might even be able to become a dream master.

'This kid is not Huang Fu Renhe's blood-related sister, but her stepsister... stepsister... Why did I not have such luck?'

As Fang Yuan stared at Lanruo, she could feel his gaze and shrugged her neck.

Fang Yuan was impressed and how she could sense his gaze and then turned his attention to Yu Xinlou.

The young proprietor of the White Cloud Business Council went through an ordeal of losing his entire family and even went to jail. After everything, he became much more mature, and the bloody wounds on his face gave him a resolute look.

"The ordeal that the White Cloud Business Council went through was a heavy blow to me, and it seems that we have lost footing in the Prefecture City... We should leave to another place, and as early as possible. I am looking forward to Master's Qingye City! If you have any favour next time, my business council will help to our fullest ability!"

He was a smart person and turned the entire business council to Fang Yuan's service, in exchange for protection.

"Don't worry, I still have some influence in Qingye City!"

Fang Yuan smiled and said.

Even though the White Cloud Business Council was damaged, it was still rather influential in Qingye City and could strengthen his influence outside the city. With their alliance, even the Spirit Returning Sect would find it hard to try and interfere with them.

"I still have to thank Master for saving my life!"

Yu Xinlou bowed and gave his thanks to Fang Yuan, as he solemnly said.

"It was casual... And I did gain from it too, so you don't have to thank me..."

Fang Yuan looked at Yu Xinlou and felt a little pitiful for him.

The conflict in his family and the betrayal from a blood-related family member completely uprooted the entire White Cloud Business Council. The old proprietor of White Cloud Business Council and the 4 Heavenly Gate Martial Artist sacrificed and paid

their lives, which strongly affected Yu Xinlou.

Of course, he was considered a strong man for being able to deal with it and grow from it.

Fang Yuan fiddled around with a blood-coloured jade in his hand, and his smile grew.

He did not lie.

He did gain from the destruction of the Wild Wolves Gang. The most important takeaway was the blood-coloured piece of jade.

'This piece of jade seems to be a treasure. Fiddling around with it for prolonged periods of time can help to improve one's health and absorb the impurities in one's body, which could be considered as improving one's physique. This was the reason why Diao Guangdou could accelerate his progress from a small waiter to a gang leader, to what he had achieved...'

He was a waiter and was middle-aged. Therefore, to be able to rise so quickly, he had to have a good potential.

Who would've known that he could become a 4 Heavenly Gate Martial Artist? This piece of jade played a big part in it and was a treasure of Diao Guangdou which he kept dearly. It seemed to also have a calming effect for him.

However, it was not enough to match Fang Yuan, which led to his death and his treasure landing into someone else's hands.

'This thing is not simple...'

At Fang Yuan's current cultivation level, this jade's ability was rather insignificant. As Fang Yuan placed it under the sun, he noticed fine red lines within the jade, like the arteries and veins in a human. He was shocked at the way Diao Guangdou used it, as it was simply squandering the item.

'There's blood hidden in the jade, forming structures similar to human meridians, and it can also protect one's divine spirit.....I'll

name you Blood Spirit Jade!'

Fang Yuan named it and promptly kept the Blood Spirit Jade properly. He appeared rushed. "Let's go... The Prefecture City is now trouble, and the further we go the better!"

"Yes, master!"

Huang Fu Renhe and Yu Xinlou both felt that he was overreacting, but still bowed and followed anyway; they did not dare to disobey.

At this moment, a large pounding was heard from the city gates, which made their expression change.

In front of the 35-yard tall city wall was two large metal doors, which under the force of machinery and human force, slowly closed up, like a beast closing its big mouth.

Hundreds of citizens were screaming just behind the doors, like ants.

"Rumble!"

In the end, the entire door was shut, and in three other directions, the same sound was heard.

On the city walls, rows of Secluded Mountain Prefecture soldiers walked out in armour. All of them wielded knives and swords and loaded their bows, as though they were facing a big threat.

The entire Secluded Mountain Prefecture City seemed like a beast ready for war.

"Closing all four doors?"

Yu Xinlou observed the scene and was shocked. "Even the previous few wars did not escalate to this intensity? What is happening in the Secluded Mountain Prefecture?"

"Regardless of what is happening, it is of no concern to any of us. The Prefecture Master and the higher-ups will settle it. If they cannot deal with it then neither can we, so let's go!"

Fang Yuan waved his sleeve, turned around and left.

It was always good to be an opportunist, but the risks this time were too high and it was unjustified to go for the rewards.

'It seems that the Secluded Mountain Prefecture made the first move, this Liu Yan is not simple...'

He thought about it, jumped on a carriage, and neglected the two behind; both of which looked at him in awe.

Table of Contents

[Carefree Path of Dreams](#)

[Synopsis](#)

[Copyright](#)

[Chapter 1: Fang Yuan](#)

[Chapter 2: Stats](#)

[Chapter 3: Spiritual Tea](#)

[Chapter 4: Questioning the Heart](#)

[Chapter 5: Leaving the Mountain](#)

[Chapter 6: A Trespasser](#)

[Chapter 7: Spiritual Beast](#)

[Chapter 8: The Exchange](#)

[Chapter 9: Guest](#)

[Chapter 10: The Trade](#)

[Chapter 11: The Secret Manual](#)

[Chapter 12: Poisonous Dragon Grass](#)

[Chapter 13: Fisherman](#)

[Chapter 14: Mixed Poison](#)

[Chapter 15: Making Amends](#)

[Chapter 16: Breaking Through Gates](#)

[Chapter 17: Spying](#)

[Chapter 18: The Plot](#)

[Chapter 19: Spiritual Rice](#)

[Chapter 20: The Approach](#)

[Chapter 21: Assassination](#)

[Chapter 22: Kill](#)

[Chapter 23: Continuation](#)

[Chapter 24: Inner Power](#)

[Chapter 25: Gift](#)

[Chapter 26: The 4 Heavenly Gates](#)

[Chapter 27: Destroying the Sect](#)

[Chapter 28: 5th Gate](#)

[Chapter 29: Spiritual Land](#)

[Chapter 30: Spiritual Bird](#)

[Chapter 31: Trouble](#)

[Chapter 32: The County](#)

[Chapter 33: Decision](#)
[Chapter 34: Four Seas Court](#)
[Chapter 35: Stalking](#)
[Chapter 36: Robbery](#)
[Chapter 37: Peeping](#)
[Chapter 38: Intense Battle](#)
[Chapter 39: Murderer](#)
[Chapter 40: Secret News](#)
[Chapter 41: Breakthrough](#)
[Chapter 42: Sixth Gate](#)
[Chapter 43: Fawn](#)
[Chapter 44: The Stalker](#)
[Chapter 45: Infiltrate](#)
[Chapter 46: Hiding](#)
[Chapter 47: The Aftermath](#)
[Chapter 48: Bamboo Fruit](#)
[Chapter 49: Spiritual Bamboo](#)
[Chapter 50: Healing](#)
[Chapter 51: Saving Lives](#)
[Chapter 52: Winning Over](#)
[Chapter 53: Urgent Matters](#)
[Chapter 54: Attack](#)
[Chapter 55: Shaoyang City](#)
[Chapter 56: Sparring](#)
[Chapter 57: Suspicion](#)
[Chapter 58: Defeat](#)
[Chapter 59: Gui Wusheng](#)
[Chapter 60: Winning](#)
[Chapter 61: Emerge](#)
[Chapter 62: A Mysterious Man](#)
[Chapter 63: Reveal](#)
[Chapter 64: Resistance](#)
[Chapter 65: The Death Gate](#)
[Chapter 66: Cultivation](#)
[Chapter 67: Mystery](#)
[Chapter 68: Flame Jade](#)
[Chapter 69: Elder Han](#)
[Chapter 70: Xuan Yin](#)
[Chapter 71: True Intentions](#)

[Chapter 72: Love Birds](#)
[Chapter 73: Arson](#)
[Chapter 74: Concealment](#)
[Chapter 75: Breakthrough](#)
[Chapter 76: Extinction](#)
[Chapter 77: Inheritance](#)
[Chapter 78: Dream Master](#)
[Chapter 79: Heaven's Element](#)
[Chapter 80: Dream Disciple](#)
[Chapter 81: Vigour of Style](#)
[Chapter 82: Solution](#)
[Chapter 83: Evolve](#)
[Chapter 84: Some Rest At Last](#)
[Chapter 85: Impudence](#)
[Chapter 86: Immortality](#)
[Chapter 87: Extermination](#)
[Chapter 88: Death from the Roar](#)
[Chapter 89: Tribulation](#)
[Chapter 90: Feared Name](#)
[Chapter 91: Leveling up](#)
[Chapter 92: Harvest](#)
[Chapter 93: Secluded Mountain Prefecture](#)
[Chapter 94: Business Centre](#)
[Chapter 95: Secret Meeting](#)
[Chapter 96: Pharmacist](#)
[Chapter 97: Aid](#)
[Chapter 98: Wild Wolves Gang](#)
[Chapter 99: Rescue Mission](#)
[Chapter 100: Birthday Dinner](#)